The Church In Rural Life

DAVID EDGAR LINDSTROM

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BY

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FOREWORD

"Of the making of books there is no end." This statement from the Old Testament is more nearly true today than the day it was uttered, and for this fact we should be profoundly grateful. The recent years have witnessed a veritable deluge of good literature, and rural life and the rural church are now beginning to get their share of attention.

Here comes another good book on the rural church. It is of special value because it comes from the pen of one who is able to look at the country church without ecclesiastical or denominational prejudice. The author is a social scientist with a rural background and a religious attitude. He is concerned to help the rural church and the rural minister to face their tasks intelligently and with a new passion based upon an understanding of country life.

The social and economic changes which have affected rural life so vitally during recent years have also had a profound influence upon the rural churches. The changed conditions of transportation, good roads, consolidated schools, the radio, and the new community basis of country life have all created for the rural church new problems and opportunities. To the extent that the rural churches and, in particular, their ministers catch the vision of these new and enlarged opportunities for service and make the necessary adjustments—to that extent alone can we hope for any great measure of success.

This volume is intended to point the way. Those who will read it seriously will be profited, and it should lead to a deeper conviction as to the place of the country church

in its own community and in the nation, and that with good average leadership there is still much to hope for by way of an improved and vitalized country church.

I have great pleasure in commending this volume and wish for it a very wide reading among the rural ministers of America.

MARK A. DAWBER.

New York, June 13, 1939.

FOREWORD

Even the bar of soap may be better for having been washed. This view, far from original, is not only for men of the cloth, but for all who profess to work for better results in human relations. The stream of thought in this book by Doctor Lindstrom is cleansing. It is also challenging.

Religion and agriculture are better linked together than allowed to drift apart. From each side there can arise grave doubts as to whether the other is passing from the picture. The impression that agriculture and rural life are merely waning phases of a civilization that is to realize its final character in complete urbanization, may have still haunted some earnest students until recent years. That view is fast losing ground. Even a minister who feels that his career rounds out to suit him best when it takes him circling higher and higher among metropolitan church spires may admit that the urbanizing of some individuals, such as himself, is not laying a pattern for the nation as a whole. It is not a case of down agriculture, up industrialization, in the United States of tomorrow; it is a case of each made more progressive and better fitted to the other.

Just as the occupation of providing foodstuffs and agricultural raw materials is likely to have increased rather than diminished function in the future, so may religion find its services intensified. A religion out of touch with the masses of people must regain its touch or new churches, or at least new religious expressions, may be expected to come into vogue. The farm family of the

mid-twentieth century needs inspiration and purification no less than the farm family of every generation before. Ministers and church school leaders have to live close to farm families in order to serve farm people in their present attitudes and with their present modes of thought.

Understanding, non-dictatorial ministers and bishops can be expected to survive in their dealings with farmers in religious matters. Rural problems in their present intensified condition have economic, social, ethical, and religious bearings. It is not for the specialist in one field to prescribe all the remedies from his own single medicine case, but each has a right and duty to invite attention to any remedy that seems to have any claim to study. A minister who insists that public clinics or business coöperation must solve a specific problem can be as wrong as sin, but in urging that attention be given to these and other eligible approaches to the solution of a problem in which his conscience tells him there is unfinished business for individuals and the public, he is doing right.

Most people are too much preoccupied with the immediate. It is this rock on which plowshares are bent in human relations. Religion has a way of clearing stoniness. Soil may be made more hospitable, workable, and fertile as a result of proper technique. This goes not only for that which is covered in soil surveys, but that which is composed of human nature itself. The human soil may respond to the sound religionist as the soil of the field responds to the sound agriculturist.

This book has real business. It is a pleasure to speed it on its way.

CHARLES L. STEWART.

PREFACE

The following chapters represent in essence eight lectures given at the summer school held at Garrett Biblical Institute, Evanston, Illinois, in the summer of 1938. The lectures were given before a class of 45 students, most of whom had served for varying periods as religious or other leaders in rural areas; they came from more than a dozen states, principally in the Mid-West. It was upon the urging of these students and the subsequent enthusiasm with which such leaders as Mark A. Dawber of the Home Missions Council, Charles E. Shike of the Illinois Church Council, and O. E. Baker of the United States Department of Agriculture encouraged their publication that they are herewith being offered.

The philosophy set forth in these pages represents the best present thinking of the author who is a layman, a student of rural social conditions, and the son of a one-time hard working and devout western Nebraska farmer. Doubtless some of the noble spirit of that father inspired the best that can be found in these pages. The work touches the present socio-economic situation as it affects the farm family; it sketchily traces some of the events since the Jamestown settlement which have had a bearing upon the situation, with especial reference to group action among farmers. The effort is constantly to relate these conditions to the work of the church.

Two emphases stand out prominently in the present work: (1) the insistence that economic and social security must be stabilized and assured for the farmer if the best in rural and national life is to be preserved; and (2) that all institutions and particularly the church in the whole

of society must work tirelessly toward that end; the institutions must be a means and not an end in this struggle for security.

Social and economic security for the masses can be attained by short-cut methods; in some countries it has been provided at the sacrifice of liberty and freedom. It is doubtful if that type of security is ultimately desirable, for it smacks of "selling one's soul for a loaf of bread." The only true security is that attained by the action of the people themselves and especially when they are fired with the highest motives of which a people are capable. In America too many have lost their assurance that security can be attained under the present order for any one to be complacent about the matter. The growth of this feeling may be because the few in strategic positions have become too materialistic—too busy making a good living for themselves to have much concern for their less fortunate brother. The religious forces must bring back a sense of responsibility for "the least of these" in the form of greater opportunity to attain economic and social security—a more equitable distribution—of wealth, yes—but of the chance and incentive to work for that wealth. The church must lose itself in this task before it can help its people find the way out.

Possibly the present work will induce thinking and discussion on these problems; if so, the effort has been worth while. A sincere effort has been made to present material impartially, yet in such a way as to lead the reader to seek further light on the problems discussed. Hence, care has been exercised in selecting references, most of which are easily accessible, either in libraries or directly from the publishers; many of the references are to works

of Agricultural Experiment Stations or the United States Department of Agriculture. This work should be useful, therefore, as a text book for short courses in seminaries, special schools, camps, discussion groups, etc.

The author wishes to express his appreciation to all those having given help, directly or indirectly, with the present work. He is especially indebted to Professor Murray Leiffer for the opportunity to give the lectures and for his encouragement in getting the work in shape for publication; to Dr. Mark A. Dawber for having read the manuscript and getting it read by Professor Ralph Felton and others; to Professor H. C. M. Case and Professor Charles L. Stewart for their critical reading of the entire manuscript; to Professor R. C. Ross and Professor R. W. Bartlett for having read parts of the manuscript; and to many colleagues in the field of Rural Sociology for the material quoted and referred to in this work, for without this rich field of material such a work would be impossible. The author also wishes to express his thanks to his wife for her valuable aid in the work, and to her brother, Ellis C. Halverson of Lake Forest College, for his help in getting the material in shape.

DAVID E. LINDSTROM.

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CHAPTER I

THE PEOPLE AND THE LAND

Purposes of Land Use

Most of the productive land in the United States is used for agricultural production. Yet of a total of almost two billion acres of land in the United States, about one-half were in farms in 1935; but of land in farms only 514 million acres were available for crops, including crop failure. "It appears that in the original condition—without irrigation or drainage—about 500 million acres in the United States could have been used only for pasture; that about 500 million acres more could have been used only for crops or pasture; and that perhaps 75 million acres might have been used for either pasture or forests. . . . Cities, parks, roads, railroads, golf courses, and cemeteries, moreover, have taken another 50 million acres from agricultural and forest uses." [1]

Three-fourths of the farm land of this country is in the Mississippi Valley; nine-tenths is in the humid and subhumid eastern three-fifths of the country; and a triangular area, the points of which are located in western Pennsylvania, southern Texas, and near the northwestern corner of North Dakota, produces four-fifths of the corn, three-fifth of the oats and wheat and three-fifths of the hay crop of the nation.[2]

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[1] Baker, O. E., "A Graphic Summary of Physical Features and Land Utilization in the United States." Misc. Pub. No. 260, U. S. D. A., Washington, D. C., 1938, page 22.

[2] *Ibid.*, page 28.

Man has used land in the United States principally for agricultural and forest purposes, only a relatively small acreage being necessary for all other purposes. Since almost all the land which should so be used is now in use for agricultural purposes,[3] a brief review of policies guiding its use is significant in this connection.

The History of Land Use Policies

An apparently limitless natural resource came into the white man's possession upon the discovery of America; hence, naturally or unnaturally, it was exploited. The earliest efforts at exploitation of its vast resources, history tells us, were for the search of precious metals. Later, wild life, then forest and mineral resources, and finally agricultural resources were exploited. The very magnitude of these resources, associated with the development of a commercial agriculture and its tendency to discount the future, were in large part responsible for the attitude that our soil resources were inexhaustible. This was in spite of the migration of colony after colony of religious groups in whom a deep sense of reverence for the soil had supposedly been implanted in the old world. So limitless did they look upon the natural resources of this country that it conveniently became "God's will" for many of them to destroy priceless forests to "clear the land" and wrest a living from the rich, virgin soil.

Whereas in the older East soil depleting processes soon set in and were well advanced in colonial times, governmental policies encouraged the exploitation of land further west, the government gauging its policy largely upon

[3] *Ibid.*, figure 59, page 49.

the expediency with which the land could be settled. Only two relatively recent policies to speed the process of "clearing the forests and breaking up the prairie" need be mentioned here: (1) The Homestead Act practically gave away quarter sections, half sections and in some cases even larger areas of land if only the settler would agree to live upon the land for a period each year for a number of years. With no more good land to give away the Act has been repealed only in 1938. (2) New encouragement of crop land expansion came as an emergency, farmers being urged to plant vast acreages to provide food supplies during the World War. Though the first policy did "get the land under the plow" and the second did "raise wheat for bread for the boys overseas," yet the harm done to human and national welfare has been realized most painfully only in the recent post-depression, drouth-marked years.

The Present Land Use Situation

The slogan, "go west, young man" has long ago fallen into disuse. The trend in agricultural production, which has been upward until 1926, since then has been reversed. With new lands being brought into use, new methods of farming being developed through the agricultural colleges and the U. S. D. A., and with exports on the increase from 1914 to 1919, there was considerable encouragement in the period 1900 to 1926 for a young man to go into farming. Since the depression exports have fallen because debt-ridden foreign countries find it difficult to buy from a heavy creditor, and prices have been so low that many young men are discouraged from entering farming. Hard times have made many farmers use their land

even more ruthlessly, moreover, than in normal times. Timber denuded hillsides, windblown plowed lands, and drouth-stricken dust plains have resulted in what has been recognized as a serious situation nationally; we come suddenly to the realization that our land resources are not limitless, that unless a stop is put to this exploitation on the part of both men and nature our best soils will be washed or blown away.

The Federal government has taken note of this situation and Federal land policies are being drastically reshaped. Studies by the National Resources Board, the U. S. D. A., the Land Grant Colleges and other institutions have indicated the disastrous effect of earlier land use policies. Colleges of agriculture have carried on experiments in soil conservation and have called attention to soil depleting practices since their establishment; recently their work has been supplemented and strengthened by the development of the Soil Conservation Service.[4] The Morrow plots at the University of Illinois, established in 1872, are famous; they demonstrate yearly the significance of proper soil management and crop practice on maintenance of soil fertility.

The average farmer, however, has found it difficult to follow these precepts. Tilling the soil was for many a means of making more money to buy more land; for others it amounted to a means of merely making a living; still others were content to eke out an existence from the soil, as in the Appalachian and Ozark Mountains. The

[4] Every rural leader should have soil reports and bulletins on care of soil, available from his college of agriculture. In Illinois soil surveys have been made for all counties, reports of 63 of which, with detailed maps, are available.

land was there for immediate use. The traditional admonition "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" was seemingly forgotten or had never been heard of by many; and the scientific teachings penetrated only to those in the more fortunate circumstances. The average farmer, even on a corn belt farm, probably still takes out more than he puts in, chiefly because the present appeals to him more than the future. Most of the improvements in agricultural technique have tended to increase yields and have hidden, somewhat, serious losses in soil fertility. Many farmers are thus not aware of the depletion going on. The number who are being induced to use conservation measures, however, is doubtless increasing, due principally to education and new governmental policies.

Production beyond the capacity of people to purchase [5] led to the Agricultural Adjustment Program which, with its present emphasis upon conservation, has probably been one of the greatest factors in changing farmers' land use policies. Posterity is so far away that the only inducement many farmers have to conserve soil resources is to be convinced that it pays every year. Yet it is very apparent that unless the average farmer can be induced to accept a conservation policy the inevitable result will be to make the land poorer and poorer and hence the people who live upon it poorer and poorer.[6]

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[5] Gray, L. C., and Baker, O. E., "Land Utilization and the Farm Problem." Misc. Pub. No. 97, U. S. D. A., Washington, D. C., 1930, pages 1, 5, and 19.

[6] Fielder, V. B., and Lindstrom, D. E., "Land Use and Family Welfare in Pope County, Ill." Published by the Uni. of Ill. Agr. Exp. Sta., Urbana. See also "Soil—the Nation's Basic Heritage," prepared by Seven Land Grant Colleges and Universities of the Tennessee Valley States, U. S. Gov. Ptg. Office, Washington, D. C., page 20.

Exploitation of land resources may continue in this country, however, without diminishing our food supply dangerously for some time.[7] An effective program of soil conservation will mean shifts and some reduction in the immediate future; but it will ultimately result in an increase in production when the program really takes effect. Improved means of production will tend to check reduction and speed increase of production. The chief concern of the farmer, therefore, probably will be in what he gets for what he sells; he must have inducements to conserve if the nation is to save the soil and is to have adequate food reasonably priced for its people at one and the same time.

Population Growth in Relation to Land Use

The farmers' stock in trade is food and fibre. The basic necessities for all the people are for food, clothing, and shelter. The more people there are who can buy these necessities the more the farmer can produce and exchange for other things he needs.

Doubtless a world market will always be needed. Though most of the farmer's products are sold in the United States, his domestic "consuming public" is not expanding as it did in the past. Changing diets and declining birth rates, the potentiality of increase in agricultural production and new technological developments make the search for world markets all the more urgent. Even now many farmers are on a self-sufficing basis; by use of modern techniques half the farmers of the nation today could provide all the food needed by our people, so that greater, rather than fewer numbers would have to become self-sufficing or move to the city.

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[7] Gray, L. C., and Baker, O. E., *op. cit.*, page 34.

"The need for farm land may be greatly affected by the diet of the people," states O. E. Baker.[8] The per capita consumption of corn, wheat, beef, and veal has been gradually decreasing in this country since 1909; it has been increasing for milk and its products, pork, and sugar. The trend has been slightly downward for all these foods combined. These are the crops and products grown on most of the land in the Mississippi Valley.

What of birth rates in the United States? Many cities over 100,000 would now lose in population if they depended upon their own natural increase. Ten adults in these cities are now raising only seven children. The number of children under 5 years of age in the urban population has probably decreased 12 or more per cent during the last ten years, and the number of persons over 65 years of age has increased approximately 50 per cent.[9]

In Illinois more than 20 counties failed to maintain their population on the basis of natural increase in 1930.[10] The counties providing the largest surplus of population in 1930 had no town over 2,500 population; the rural and farm areas are providing the surplus. But the trend in birth rates in rural areas is also downward. Whereas farm families averaged almost six in the last decade of the nineteenth century, they now average about four and in some agricultural sections only about three. The situation is of concern not only from the standpoint of population

[8] *Op. cit.*, page 55.

[9] Folsom, J. C., and Baker O. E., "A Graphic Summary of Farm Labor and Population." Misc. Pub. No. 265, U. S. D. A., page 17.

[10] Lindstrom, D. E., "Natural Increase in Population, Rural and Urban, 1930." Transactions of the Ill. Acad. of Sci., Vol. 2, No. 30, December, 1937.

increase but eugenically as well. C. M. Goethe,[11] president of the Immigration Study Commission has pointed out, "Many old stock Americans dare only have three kiddies." Three children per family would merely maintain population; families of four or more children, as are frequently found in rural areas, are necessary to keep it growing. Baker shows that birthrate is also related to taxable wealth, for farm people of the South and Southwest are contributing 25 to 50 per cent more children proportionately to the nation's future than are the farm people of the Pacific Coast, the eastern corn belt, and the northeastern states. This heavy burden of child bearing and education in the South is associated with a much lower taxable wealth per adult.[12]

Planes of Living of People on the Land

"The per capita personal income in the southern rural-farm population in 1929 was about two-thirds that for the farm population of the nation."[13] This is the section from which the largest surplus of population for the nation comes. Nineteen per cent of the farms of the nation, on the other hand, produced an average of over $2,500 worth of products. These farms are located mostly in the dairy belt, the corn belt, the wheat regions, and the valleys of the Far West, with a few in Texas and Oklahoma. The net value of farm products out of which

[11] Goethe, C. M., "Czechoslovakia Caught in a Nutcracker." Eugenics Pamphlet No. 12, published by the Eugenics Society of Northern California, Sacramento, 1937.

[12] Folsom, J. C., and Baker, O. E., *op. cit.*, page 39.

[13] Taylor, Carl C., "Constructive Measures for Dealing with the South's Population Problems." Mimeo. lecture, Bur. Agr. Ec., U. S. D. A., 1938.

living expenses, rent, interest, savings, and expenditures for clothing, schooling, church, etc., must come averaged under $1,000 for most of the South and upper Great Lakes region in 1929.[14]

Incomes vary greatly, not only between regions but within a state or community. "The average net income of a group of farms in central Illinois varied from $3,344 in 1928 to $558 in 1930; the difference in income between the one-fifth most profitable farms and the one-fifth least profitable changed only $914, declining from $3,874 in 1928 to $2,960 in 1930. Thus even in 1930 the better managed farms were almost $3,000 better off than the farms with less efficient management." [15]

Planes of living are not necessarily indicated by gross farm income, however, nor even yet by net cash income. Many farm families with relatively low incomes have better standards of living, measured by the quality of living than do those with higher incomes. Moreover, those with the largest capital investment are usually hit hardest in depression times. Though a large number of counties in the South had a standard of living index of under 20 (index based on per cent of farm homes with electricity, telephone, radio, automobile, and water piped into dwelling), compared with an index of over 80 for northern Illinois, for example, yet many of these counties had a lower average of ratio of persons on relief to total population than the northern Illinois counties in June, 1935.[16]

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[14] Baker, O. E., "A Graphic Summary of the Number, Size, and Type of Farm and Value of Products." Misc. Pub. No. 266, U. S. D. A., page 63, 1938.

[15] Case, H. C. M., and Mosher, M. L., "Farm Practices That Pay." Uni. of Ill. Agr. Exp. Sta. Cir. 389.

[16] Taylor, C. C., *op. cit.*, figures 6 and 7.

One study emphasizes that even on rich soil one may find poor people.[17] Economic factors such as high drainage costs, often are responsible for such conditions, though the human element—ability, knowledge, and willingness to use effectively the resources at hand, play a large part.

Family living furnished by the farm forms a significant bulwark against starvation for many farm families, a thing denied many of their city cousins. (Suburban vegetable gardens and part-time farms on small acreages near industrial centers have come to be an important means of supplementing an otherwise too-meager salary for an increasing number of workers in the city.[18]) The thrifty family, the one having the best knowledge of how to manage a farm and the one which works together (possibly uses more family labor in the garden, stays a bit longer in the field when necessary and plans the farm operations so as to take the best advantage of all resources possible) is the one in any area which has the best income.[19] These are the families, also, in the best position to advance their level of living.

Many factors bear upon the securing of a decent living on a farm, however, other than management. Price changes have probably been a major factor in causing many farm bankruptcies. Many farmers bought tractors

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[17] White, M. L., *et al.*, "Rich Land—Poor People." Research Report No. 1, Farm Sec. Adm., U. S. D. A., 1938.

[18] Bureau of the Census Publication, "Part-time Farming in the United States." U. S. Census of Agr., 1935, Chapter II.

[19] Lindstrom, D. E., *et al.*, "Standards of Farming and Living in the Lick Creek Area, Union County, Illinois." Mimeo. Pub. of the Uni. of Ill. Agr. Exp. Sta. See also "General Conditions and Tendencies Influencing the Nation's Land Requirements," Part I of the Supplementary Report of the Land Planning Committee of the National Resources Board, Washington, D. C., 1936, page 10.

in 1937 hoping for a continuation of the good prices of 1936; when corn prices dropped below 40 cents a bushel many farmers found it difficult to meet the payments as they came due; others promptly cancelled their machinery orders. Farms mortgaged for less than half their values in 1929 decreased in value so that they would not sell for the mortgage five years later. The struggle by farmers for a stabilized price started before the Civil War and is still at the heart of the farm problem today. Moreover, the average farmer, starting in his youth with only limited capital, cannot hope to own an economically sized farm in the best agricultural areas and have it free of debt short of a life time. In the meantime he sacrifices many of the comforts and advantages of life in order to make ends meet. Many farmers in central Illinois would rather rent good land than buy poorer land than they have been operating, especially in the face of debts, taxes, price depressions, and weather hazards.

Trends in Land Ownership

Farmers of America are slowly losing the land they operate;[20] however, owner-operated farms still outnumber tenant-operated farms, and owner-operated farm acreage exceeds tenant-operated farm acreage. "The proportion of farms operated by tenants has increased from 35 per cent in 1930 to 42 per cent in 1935. The percentage of farm land operated under lease has increased from 31 per cent in 1900 to 45 per cent in 1935. The equities of farm operators of the nation constituted 54 per cent of

[20] Vance, Rupert, "Farmers Without Land." Public Affairs Committee, 8 West 40th Street, New York City, N. Y., 1937, pages 3 and 4.

the value of all farm real estate in 1900 and only 42 per cent in 1930."[21] In Illinois, Iowa, and South Dakota farm operators had an average of less than 30 per cent equity in their farms; Maine, New Hampshire, and West Virginia farmers had an average of over 70 per cent. This situation, of course, has been affected by changes in land values. In periods of optimism land is oversold, as in the period before, during, and immediately following the World War. Since that time land values have tended to come down, thus making the situation relative to tenancy appear somewhat more severe than it really is.

Farm tenancy is very widespread in the United States. Increasing proportions of the farmers are becoming tenants in the regions where commercial agriculture is dominant, and increasing proportions of the tenants are becoming croppers or wage hands in the South. Many tenants, especially those who have only a one-year lease, are among the most exploitative of farmers, particularly in areas of commercial agriculture. Society is interested in soil maintenance as a guarantee of adequate supplies of food stuffs and agricultural raw materials. Hence, exploitative agriculture is against the best interests of society.

The exploitative type of tenant is a social problem because of his effect on family and community life. A tenant farmer usually has a large family; if he moves as often as once every two years, and many do, his children fail to get proper schooling and his family cannot become a contributing element in church and community life.

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[21] Turner, H. A., "A Graphic Summary of Farm Tenure." Misc. Bull. No. 261, U. S. D. A. page 3. See also Woofter, T. J., Jr., "Landlord and Tenant on the Cotton Plantation," Research Monograph V, WPA, Washington, D. C., 1936, page XIX.

The cause of tenancy varies; hence there is no one solution for the problems arising from tenancy. Case and Ackerman list 12 causes of tenancy problems: purchase of farms to secure advance in land value as a source of income; low prices, leading landowners to take all income possible from the soil and urging heavier cropping than desirable; transfer of heavily indebted land to creditor institutions which usually does not result in constructive farming; tenants having no assurance of continued occupancy; bidding up of farm rentals causing many tenants to accept low living standards so as to meet the competition and secure a farm; tenants finding it necessary to invest heavily in operating equipment; heavy investments leading tenants to rent larger acreages to lessen the overhead; landlords often being situated so far away from their farms they cannot give adequate attention to the needs of the farm and the tenant; reduced productivity unrecognized by many; many farm owners so old they are only interested in immediate income; older tenants becoming relatively more numerous, making it more difficult for a young man to get a farm; larger farms, fewer outlets for farmers in new regions and the brief notice given to vacate a farm leaving many worthy tenants without farms.[22]

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[22] Case, H. C. M., and Ackerman, Joseph, "Our Farm Tenancy Problems." Mimeo. Pub., Uni. of Ill. Col. of Agr. Ext. Ser., May, 1938. See also Schuler, E. A., "Social Status and Farm Tenure." Social Research Report No. IV, BAE, U. S. D. A., Washington, D. C., 1938; also "Report of the President's Committee on Farm Tenancy." Message from the President, 75th Congress, 1st Session, House Document No. 149, U. S. Ptg. Office, 1937; and Gray, L. C., *et al.*, "Farm Ownership and Tenancy." Separate from Yearbook, 1923, No. 897, U. S. D. A., 1924.

Remedies for such problems are not easy to find. Among the most significant, Case and Ackerman suggest long tenure with written leases providing for good farmers on good farms, more adequate standards of farming, living, housing, sanitation, and support of community institutions, reimbursing of the tenant for improvement work from which value has not been realized by him and reimbursement of landlord for abuse of the property on the part of the tenant.

Many of these situations seem foreign or at least so far removed from the church that the church can do little, if anything, about them. However, a good church will seek equitable relations between landlord and tenant, urge and expect honesty on the part of both, and see that everything is done to put tenants on a more equitable basis with the other people of the community in so far as the individual or family in question has the capacity for that equality.

Attitudes Toward Land Use—Past and Present

It is said that land in France farmed by so-called peasants is as rich now as six hundred years ago. Yet much land in the United States farmed less than one hundred years is almost worthless—indeed, land broken out in 1918 as a result of the pressure for large supplies of food has become so barren through wind and rain erosion that it will not even grow grass.

Attitudes toward land use are changing. Most farmers want to conserve and build up their soil if they find it possible to do so. Tenants who move often do not find it possible to start a soil conserving program and landlords who depend upon their holdings to tide them

through old age are more interested in the immediate income from the farm than in long-time soil conserving plans.

The attitudes toward land use in the United States come out of the economic and social situation in which farmers find themselves. Until that situation can be changed a great many farmers will continue to exploit the soil.

The Newest Land Use Policy

Soil conservation is therefore a problem with which the nation has found it necessary to deal. Decreasing yields on the best lands, farms whose soils have become seriously eroded with resulting distress among the operators, drouths, floods, and dust storms have caused a change not only in national land policy but a change in the attitude of the people generally.

The newest national policy not only recognizes the need for soil conservation and that the government must help in the program, but it also recognizes the need for storing up in good years to protect against scarcity in poor years. "Corn stored in years of big crops will be available for use in years of small crops."[23] Whether this new national policy to help conserve soil, store up surpluses, and protect farmers will be attained through the present legislation is yet to be determined.

"Farmers are being paid to do what they should do anyway; why they should be is hard to understand." This is the attitude many city people have. Yet the reactions against the present national legislation as being

[23] "Corn Loans, Acreage Allotments and Marketing Quotas." Leaflet No. 38-corn-1, AAA, U. S. D. A. See also "The New Farm Act." Leaflet G-83, AAA, U. S. D. A.

administered indicates that monetary inducements are evidently not enough. Estimates are that from 30 to 60 per cent of the farmers of Illinois will plant within the allotment given. Theoretically, the allotments are such as to insure against taking more out of the land than is put in, that is, to encourage planting of legumes, spreading of limestone and rotating crops so as to keep down erosion effectively and build up the land. Use should be for future as well as present generations.

What new inducements are needed? State legislation provides now, also, for setting up soil conservation districts in which by vote of three-fourths of the landowners, certain land use practices can be imposed on all land users of the district. Why must such drastic practices be necessary? The answer lies partly in the system of land tenure, partly in the price situation and partly in the attitude of the farmer himself. To understand the problem one must know the individual farmer in relation to the farm he is operating.

The Obligation of the Church

A church which serves rural people must first understand the people and the motives impelling them to act before it can have much influence on behavior either of the individual or of the group. The servant of the church, the minister, should be foremost in analysing farmers' problems, especially those in which ethics play so important a part. By coöperating with existing agencies, examining their programs fairly and impartially, the church can be a vital factor in helping solve farmers' problems.

Even a cursory examination of the farmers' many problems reveals that most of them are shot through with

ethics. Many excuse themselves on the ground that they are victims of circumstances—that they must do as the group does. Those holding such attitudes leave the church and its teachings out of everyday dealings. A tenant knows he will be on a certain farm only one or two years—is his obligation to his family greater than his obligation to the soil? What does it profit him to save soil for the fellow that follows him? The other fellow doesn't do it, so why should he? These are questions the church in rural life must help answer.

The farmer today must know his soil. He cannot know what he should know about it without study, and most farmers must be induced to study and to use results of experiments carried on to know more about handling soil properly. The church has a real obligation here—to create an open mind among its members to new ways of doing things. Though the state has taken over the educational function, it can only offer opportunities to learn—a conviction of obligation to learn must be brought about by the church.

Finally, the church in rural life must itself be open minded as to ways and means of conserving soil to its best uses. This, after all, is a sacred duty—human life is sacred and the use of land for human welfare is therefore of primary concern to the church. People of necessity must have something for which to live; a religion is vital which instills zeal for the maintenance of a culture and a passion for the survival of a people. The rural church can well give renewed emphasis to the importance of saving the soil and its right uses in the advancement of a civilized culture, both in rural and urban areas.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What should be the land policy in a country with overproduction, underconsumption, high and increasing farm tenancy, decreasing soil fertility reserves and an unduly low farm income? How should these problems be attacked in your own community?
2. Can farmers of your community find it possible to have adequate incomes and at the same time maintain soil fertility? In what ways?
3. How can the masses of farmers be brought to use the resources available for soil conservation such as the results from experiment stations, the extension services of the college of agriculture, and the services of the United States Department of Agriculture?
4. What can the church do to help stabilize land use so as to save soil and provide adequate living standards?
5. How and in what ways can a church help initiate and carry forward a program in the community to conserve soil resources? List government and other agencies which might help in such a program.

READINGS

Included in each section of the readings are the sources used in the preceding chapter. In addition, other pertinent readings are to be found in the "readings." Most of the materials found in each "readings" section have been selected because they are pertinent to the problems discussed in the chapter preceding, and also because they are easily accessible. Most of the references from the colleges of agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture may be had free upon request.

Many and valuable bibliographies are available.[24] Among these are the bibliographies on various subjects

[24] See, for example, Landis, Benson Y., "A Guide to the Literature of Rural Life." Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, New York, 1938.

prepared from time to time by Mary G. Lacy and her associates of the United States Department of Agriculture. The following should be of especial interest in connection with the present work:

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CHAPTER II

GROUPS IN RURAL LIFE

Primary Motives for Group Life

The isolation of farm life is fast disappearing. Only those areas are now isolated which are called "backward." The motives for forming groups among rural people are therefore changing; these changes are significant to rural people and to those accepting positions of leadership among rural people.

The conquering of the "savage" and the "primeval forest" or "boundless prairie" took a different type of group [1] life than is required today in organizing an electric coöperative or reorganizing a school. When Indians menaced would-be settlers, groups in small localities had to act quickly and in concert without concern for individual differences if the group hoped to survive. When government came in to remove the Indian menace the settlers spread out as individual family groups on land acquired from the government. Groups were then formed for mutual aid:[2] to trade work, for protection against hazards, to build schools, churches, and to break new land. It was this pioneering period out of which grew the spirit of individualism and independence which had become so ingrained in the farm life of post-revolutionary days.

Farm life in America spread out in a pattern different from that in many areas of Europe [3]—rather than center-

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[1] Bogardus, E. S., "Contemporary Sociology." Page 116.

[2] Ross, E. A., "Principles of Sociology." Page 245.

[3] Sorokin, Zimmerman, and Galpin, "Source Book in Rural Sociology." Page 267.

ing their homes in villages, farmers built them as individual farmsteads. Hence, road building and other means of communication led to the formation of many groups, either voluntary or, later, aided by local government to overcome the handicap of distance between farmsteads. Then private enterprise came in to provide service for a profit. Grocery stores, mills, hardware stores, blacksmith shops, and department stores grew up in clusters "where the railroad came through" and farmers of America "came into town to do their trading."

Trading soon became a problem, especially selling, for grocery, hardware, and dry goods merchants soon came in to sell to farmers on a basis calculated to net the largest returns possible. The farmer bought and sold at a price made by someone else. Grain and livestock had to be sold by the individual farmer to a group and the farmer had to stand most of the transportation costs. Conflicts arose and out of these conflicts farmers formed groups for protection against unfair trade practices.[4]

Religious and nationality groups came flocking to American shores, forced out by an intolerant homeland or lured by a rich land of liberty. These groups settled here and there over the country in spots not too unlike the terrain of the homeland. Even today these "made" groups can be found in various stages of disintegration under the impetus of modern American forces.

Early Forms of Groups Among Farmers

Families—father, mother, and children living together under one roof—were the earliest form of group life among rural people. They were the working units as

[4] See Chapter IV.

well as the living units in rural society.[5] Large families were the vogue—families of ten or more being quite common. Thus the farmer had a plentiful labor supply—if he was blessed with sons — and the family became a neighborhood group as its members married into other families near. Kinship remained an important group-making factor in rural life until modern forms of communication dissipated its influence. Mutual aid, which was the basis for the formation of the earliest farmer groups in America gave rise to face-to-face types wherein men came together for butchering, or to build a log school or church. New homes, hewn out of native lumber, were creations of the entire neighborhood.

Later, smaller groups of "kinfolks" formed for birthday parties or christenings and issues of the day were discussed. Information about state affairs was transmitted by word of mouth which was often said to be carried faster than the fastest bird. Even today in some of the "backward" sections information of certain types is so quickly relayed by this system of communication that one wonders how it is possible.

As farm families spread to the West they formed clubs which often met in various homes, schools, or rugged churches. Most of these were for exchange of information—"passing the time of day"—and usually included some form of group entertainment. Out of these groups grew the "neighborhood" of which one reads so much in books in Rural Sociology.[6]

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[5] Kolb, J. H., and Brunner, Edmund deS., "A Study of Rural Society." Page 18.

[6] Kolb, J. H., "Primary Groups in Rural Society." Wis. Res. Bull. No. 51. See also Williams, "The Expansion of Rural Life."

Political and religious issues were frequently the basis upon which farm groups soon began to develop. As soon as the land began to produce enough for sale above family needs sectional conflicts arose giving rise to groups cutting across neighborhood lines and binding likeminded individuals into factions at odds with each other. The freedom of worship, also, gave every individual the opportunity to take issue with the "orthodox" method of observance or belief, resulting in many "splits" in the church groups. New groups under a zealous leader who claimed to have had a new "vision" sprang up almost everywhere. The established orders, justifying themselves on the ground that "none of our faith shall be without a church" established church after church in sparsely settled areas, using for support "mission" money from stronger bodies "back east."

So intent was each group upon its own purpose that those who were members of the various groups looked upon them as things in themselves. The school was set up to teach the three r's. The church was there to bring the gospel. The political party developed out of a loyalty to a man, idea, or platform, and church must be kept out of it. The farmers' club met to discuss farmers' problems, which soon became grievances against the "middleman" or the "railroads" and then insisted that religion and politics must be kept out.

Still another type of grouping soon developed in rural America, namely, the town group and the country group.[7] The growth of little trade centers fostered the development of such a grouping, for town folks lived more or

[7] Gillette, J. M., "Rural Sociology." Chapter XXIX.

less together, they could wear good clothes, they didn't have to work so hard and there developed a feeling of awe, envy, scorn, or aloofness on the part of farm groups in general for this town group. True, they met while trading, sometimes at church, though the farmer preferred his open-country church, and some of the farmers' children came to grade or high school. Even the farmer who later moved to town to retire and wanted his milk cow and a few chickens was never taken into some of the most intimate "in-groups" in town.[8]

This separation growing out of the original interests of the groups and the suspicion on the part of some of the farmers that they were getting a "raw deal" at the hands of some of the town merchants led to the development of still another type of groups—the "pooling" coöperative. Why pay the hardware man two prices for twine when carload lots could be secured at two-thirds or one-half the price per pound? Why sell livestock to the country buyer or the town butcher when the farm group itself could sell through their own agent and save the dealer's commission for themselves? Why, indeed, could not farmers run their own elevators, cream stations, and even grocery stores? Many groups tried, many failed and some few significant groups succeeded in helping to lay the groundwork for the present producer-coöperative system in America.

The one-room school is the product of early farmer neighborhood group life. The high school, however, came largely out of town life. The earliest efforts to bridge

[8] Lindstrom, D. E., "The Organization of Local Groups of Farm People of Illinois." Thesis submitted to the Uni. of Wis. in partial fulfillment of the Degree of Philosophy, 1932, page 4.

town and country interests were probably to establish high schools which would serve districts embracing more than just the town limits. These efforts in turn resulted in groupings of various kinds—some to sharpen and bring into focus the town-country conflict arising chiefly from differences in taxation to support the school. These groupings and conflicts are by no means a thing of the past. They are very much in evidence whenever efforts to change boundaries are made.

Effect of Modern Conditions Upon Farm Groups

The farmer is no longer confined to his neighborhood or his one-time horse-and-buggy community; he now has a car, a telephone, electricity, and a radio. Though he may have to travel slowly and painfully over the two, three, or four miles of dirt or mud road to the surfaced road, once he gets there he may seek the "next town," the county seat, or a city beyond. Trading is no longer necessarily done in the nearby center; though grain is shipped from the neighborhood (often coöperative) elevator, livestock may just as likely be trucked to the terminal market two hundred miles away.[9] When the open-country church closed some of the members went to town to church but quite a number just quit going. The one-room school is no longer a neighborhood center, for people don't "neighbor" the way they used to, though a few people may keep a school club going which depends for its program on "entertainment" to attract people.

The local high school in town has become a sort of center, chiefly because of the heavy extra-curricular pro-

[9] Lindstrom, D. E. "Forces Affecting Participation of Farm People in Rural Organization." Bull. 423, Uni. of Ill. Agr. Exp. Sta., 1930.

gram developed by the teachers around "special interests." Athletics, dramatics, and school parties may attract occasional crowds of town and country folk, mostly parents or friends of the children in school. Frequently these "programs" conflict with church and other community group activities, for considerable time is required for "practice" and for trips in contests with other schools.

The county seat has become an important center for a number but not all of the farmers of the community.[10] The county agent is located there and many meetings are called there of special interest to these "up-and-coming" farmers—livestock feeding schools, for example, to which an extension specialist from the university comes, meetings of boards of directors of various types of coöperatives operating on the county or regional basis or conferences with county or state officers of organizations.

So-called radical groups sometimes form among rural people. Some characterize them as "direct action" groups. They may be likened to the "vigilantes" of an earlier day who, taking the law into their own hands, hung cattle thieves or in more recent times "caught" chicken thieves. In the South the most vicious form of direct action group is the lynching gang for redress of wrongs upon womankind.

Depression times are periods in which numerous "direct action" groups arise. "Penny" sales to prevent a neighbor from losing everything at a forced sale, milk strikes and "holiday" movements frequently have become front page news even in city newspapers. Frequently outside "stimulators" have had a hand in the local uprising and "strik-

[10] Brunner, Edmund deS., and Kolb, J. H., "Rural Social Trends." Page 265.

ers" are often not the "home folks" but young men coming from other parts, many of them to seek excitement.

Politics makes for groups in rural life, as well. Alignment with particular political parties are sometimes without apparent reason. In certain sections "straight tickets" are the rule and not the exception. Party leaders and "local bosses" are constantly at work to gain new recruits and patronage often plays an important part in keeping these alignments.

Most recently, relief, WPA, and many of the "emergency" agencies of government have caused new group alignments. In the better agricultural sections the heaviest relief load is found in small towns, though areas near the margin, agriculturally, have a large number of "relief" families on farms.[11] The farmer on good land who has never been threatened with the necessity for seeking the aid of society tends to be intolerant of the "reliefers." He is incensed, moreover, when a farm hand prefers to stay on WPA to taking work with him, even though it be for as much as three months at $25.00 per month and keep. Hence, though pride keeps many from accepting public aid, once they do, something in the nature of the man seems lost—or so his farmer friends and neighbors feel. The coming of "outside" relief has thus not only made chasms in rural neighborhood life but it threatens to set up a new class in rural life—the indigent class.

These are some of the group situations which a young man going into the community as a leader—preacher, teacher, or what-not—may find. He must adjust himself

[11] Fielder, V. B., and Lindstrom, D. E., "Land Use and Family Welfare in Pope County, Illinois." *Op. cit.*

to them and decide what course he shall take with respect to them—ignore them or deal with them so as to try to make the community a better place in which to live.

"Meetings" of farm groups in the local community are still held. In communities where the families own their own homes or are privileged to enjoy long tenure on the same farm the open-country church is still open, the local school (or consolidated school) is the community center; and, like as not, a community club or community unit [12] is organized for educational and social purposes whose executive committee attends a county program planning meeting once a year to get help from a university specialist in Rural Sociology. The rural pastor, who lives in the community and serves that church by preference, is a "leader behind the scenes" in the community unit and attends all rural training schools and rural life conferences he can. The rural school teacher is trained for her job. She teaches, using a modern curriculum which takes lessons from the immediate agricultural environment. She is also a community leader, encouraging rural organizations and taking part in community meetings. Though none may be so ideal yet there are rural communities which approach very closely the above qualifications.

The Relation of Rural Group Life to the Church

The pastor or religious leader in old Europe has traditionally had much to do with the development of reform measures among farm people. One outstanding example is that of Bishop Grundwig of Denmark [13] but one can

[12] Lindstrom, D. E., "The Rural Community Unit." Published by the Ext. Ser. in Agr. and Home Ec., Uni. of Ill., 1939.

[13] Howe, F. C., "Denmark—The Coöperative Way." Coward McCann, 1936.

find numerous accounts of the efforts of pastors in starting coöperatives as in Belgium and France. In the Orient, likewise, religious leaders have been foremost, as has Kagawa of Japan. Accounts of agricultural missionaries in India further reveal significant accomplishments as, for example, those of Brayton C. Case, of Pyinmana, Burma.[14]

Farmers' organizations including coöperatives have grown up in America quite largely outside the church. True, many good church people have been very active in farm organization work; but there has been no close relationship as in some of the countries mentioned above.

One of the earliest farm organizations—the Grange—had some religious motivation. But it built its program consciously so that church sectarianism would not injure its progress. However, it has not been free of sectarianism, for the very fact that it is a secret order keeps some sects from allowing its members to join the Grange. Almost all farm organizations believe in the church—give it their "moral" support, but religion, to them, belongs in the church and has no place in their programs.

Farm organizations and coöperatives have become widespread in America as will be shown later. Can they continue without the influence of the church? In the present situation it seems they must, for they cannot embrace the church; under the present administrative set-up of churches, they must ignore all churches.

Yet the church has a place in all types of rural group life. Courage, tact, and aggressiveness will be needed by

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[14] Case, Brayton C., "Adventuring in Better Agriculture in Burma." Agricultural Mission Notes of the Agr. Miss. Found., 156 Fifth Avenue, N. Y., No. 27, July, 1938, page 6.

all church groups if they are to exert the ethical guidance needed now, as always.

All church leaders serving rural areas should sympathetically comprehend the varied and complicated problems and programs affecting modern rural life. They should know that good farming requires scientific knowledge. Then, a first step in the direction of that sympathetic understanding is to train ministers for service, especially in rural areas. Seminaries should make it possible for their students to attend colleges of agriculture. Training for the rural ministry in modern institutions equipped for that purpose is as essential as agricultural or medical training is for the foreign missionary.

Ministers now serving rural churches should become intimately acquainted with programs in progress in the community, county, state, and nation to improve rural life and then take a definite part in advancing such programs as are worthy of his support—not necessarily as a minister always, but frequently as a good citizen.

Encouragement should be given rural churches to serve the group—the agricultural group—as well as the individual needs in the community. The church can be used as a meeting center for a community unit, for town-country gatherings, for rural youth, for coöperatives, and for discussion groups. The minister should spend time and energy in helping organize such groups or programs even though they meet in another church. His sermons should "fit" local problems—be built out of the everyday individual and group situations in which people find themselves. The moral and spiritual elements can be found in every phase of rural life—the church should not be "blind" to these issues, but be ready to stand

forth for the right in any situation insofar as it is given insight to see "right" through study of the situation, as well as through meditation.

The church has an important mission in the rural field. Ministers have always helped parishioners distinguish between "right" and "wrong" and have used every means at hand to "convict" people of their sins and "convert" them to the good way of life. But in modern times a group can be guilty of doing wrong—of being misguided. But the church — being divided itself — can have little influence on a "division" among farm groups. Moreover, many ministers in rural parishes are not well enough trained to distinguish between "right" and "wrong" ways groups have of solving problems. Many church leaders severely condemned the "killing of little pigs" while condoning, or at least tolerating, drastic cuts in employment, the latter resulting in much more distress and human suffering nationally than the former. Can a rural minister be trained well enough so that he can see these issues clearly and with understanding and then stand forth for the right as he is given to see it? Rural ministers who do so have full churches and a loyal and enthusiastic following.

In general, it must be recognized that the same person's behavior varies from group to group. "The behavior at a church service, where attention and reverence is required," [15] is certainly different from the behavior of that same individual at work, in a community meeting, or at a neighborhood party. Yet in each of these instances the individual remains physically the same. It

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[15] Schmidt, Emerson P., *et al.*, "Man and Society." 1937, page 5.

is for this reason that some people can be "good" on Sunday and take every advantage the law will allow on week days. The greatest task of the church is to live in the everyday life of the individual in all his group activities.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What has been the history of group life in your community and how has it affected present-day community life?
2. To what extent have groups of various types just grown up? What were the chief causes for their origin and growth?
3. How have modern conditions affected group life in your community? What now seems necessary to make the group life more effective?
4. Has the farm group tended to become separate; what factors help to keep farmers interested in the life of the community?
5. What approach can be made to integrate and coördinate group life in the community? What should be the role of the church?

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CHAPTER III

THE INSTITUTIONS IN RURAL LIFE

The Nature of Rural Institutions

"Any institution is simply a definite and established phase of the public mind, not different in its ultimate nature from public opinion, though often seeming, on account of its permanence and the visible customs and symbols in which it is clothed, to have a somewhat distinct and independent existence," stated Charles H. Cooley in his "Social Organization." [1] The political state, the church, the school, all are thought of as institutions, and so they are—but the general idea is that they are the institutions—rather than that everything about them make up the institution— the people, the organization, the way things are done as well as the buildings themselves.[2] In rural life, also, the things we usually look upon as institutions are the school and the church. Yet the family, local government, our language, the system of private property characterized by the independent farm and farmstead in America, are all institutions; they are products of human invention. They grew out of permanent needs of human nature.

Many institutions in rural life in America, though being influenced by European patterns, have by adaptation become peculiarly American. The scattered type of farmstead referred to above is an illustration. The one-room school, which was a product of early close-knit neighbor-

[1] Cooley, Charles H., "Social Organization." Page 313.

[2] Kolb, J. H., and Brunner, Edmund deS., "A Study of Rural Society." Page 359.

hood life, is another example. "Home Missions" is a peculiarly American type of institution, combining the spirit of St. Paul and the disciples with denominationalism. A knowledge of the most significant rural institutions is essential to a proper understanding of rural life today. Many new forces are playing upon institutional life in rural areas; a rural leader must be aware of these forces if rural institutions are to be reshaped to the best interests of all the people of the community. Each form of life should live by institutions, never for them.[3]

Institutions for Making or Earning a Living

"Farming is a mode of living as well as a means of making a livelihood." [4] For some farmers it has been primarily a means of making enough money to buy more land for speculative purposes. The family welfare became secondary in the hope that "someday" the parents could take things easy. The early situation in a typical midwestern farm area has been described by Ernest Elmo Calkins as follows: "The old hierarchy of successful farmers, whose land cost them little and was close to town where it shared in city values, sold out when profits began to shrink. Their children were educated for other fields. The purchasers lacked the solid backlog of years of prosperity, they paid higher prices for their land which did not continue to appreciate, they perhaps were without experience with local conditions, and so they were ill-prepared to face a long period of agricultural slump, business depression and a series of natural catastrophies." [5]

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[3] McIver, Robert M., "Functions of Institutions" in E. L. Bogardus' "Contemporary Sociology." Page 313.

[4] Kolb and Brunner, *op. cit.*, page 360.

[5] Calkins, Ernest Elmo, "They Broke the Prairie." Page 17.

The institution of owner-operated land gave way and is still giving way to the tenant-operated farm. The owner may live in town—a retired farmer; or be a business man who purchased the farm as a safe investment; or the farm may have been "lost" to a bank or insurance company. A tenant rarely buys the best land—he goes to the second best where his resources will permit him to buy.

The system of leasing land—many farms are leased by verbal contract for as long as the situation is mutually agreeable to landlord and tenant—has developed into an institution in American life. Unless changed, this institution bids fair to place a landless people upon the best land in the nation, for tenancy is still increasing. As has been indicated something is being done to improve the situation by education, and more could be done by means of legislation to insure longer tenure, opportunity to secure some equity in the land and to encourage a more careful selection of the operators.[6]

Ideas with respect to farm management, many of which had all but become institutions, are changing. There is little "planting by the moon" today; rather, successful farmers realize that attention to new developments coming from their colleges of agriculture relative to new varieties of crops, control of insect pests, results of experiments in feeding livestock, etc., all have a bearing on that success. Hence, extension teaching by demonstration and otherwise, provided by colleges of agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture, can be counted an important modern institution affecting making or

[6] Case and Ackerman, *op. cit.*

earning a living. Yet, many farmers are bound by the methods of their ancestors ("the way Dad did it is good enough for me"), the customs of the community, or the type of land tenure under which they operate. For a farmer may know that his land needs limestone yet think he can do nothing but farm as he always has because "the landlord wants it that way" or he hasn't the necessary capital to enable him to make the improvement.

Tractor farming has come more and more to displace horse farming on many farms in the better farming areas of America. Hence the unit of operation changes, for almost twice as much corn acreage can be taken care of by use of a tractor as by use of a four-horse team, especially if there are lights on the tractor and the outfit is run in shifts. The old hoe and cradle culture still existing in some parts of Europe has given way to the modern farm machine. This machine culture not only calls for larger farms—the family farm of the central states being more nearly 240 than 160 acres—but encourages smaller farm families as the need for manual labor diminishes with an increase in the use of machinery. Many efforts have been made to perfect the mechanical cotton picker; if successful, this machine will be a serious threat to one of the nation's most arduous forms of family labor and may have profound effects on the culture of the Old South.[7]

Farmers have always had to borrow money. A monthly income of any size is not usual on the average general

[7] Horne, R. L., and McKibbon, E. G., "Mechanical Cotton Picker." Report A-2, National Research Project, Fed. WPA. See also McCrory, S. H., and Hendrickson, R. F., "Technological Trends Affecting Agriculture." Reprint from Report of the Subcommittee on Technology, National Resources Committee, 1937, page 97.

type or cash grain farm. Only on dairy farms can one find a sizeable monthly income. Barter, in the form of trading wheat for flour, or eggs and cream for groceries, led naturally to store credit. Giving credit in one form or another is, therefore, a deep-seated form of rural institution out of which many evils and consequent remedies have grown. The farm mortgage—rigid in the face of fluctuating prices and depressions— gave rise during the depression period of the early 1930's to foreclosures and they in turn to moratoriums, penny sales, and debt-adjustment committees.

Credit needs of farmers have given rise to governmental aid administered through the Farm Credit Administration and encouraging the organization of farmer-owned coöperatives for the supplying of ample credit of various forms at reasonable rates.[8]

The institution of private property, which so rapidly turned lands into farms, privately-owned mines, lumber lands, and oil fields, has remained as a primary source of revenue for government through taxation. Farmers have complained, bitterly at times, that the one form of private property—real estate—which in the form of farms and farm improvements is always easy to find and assess —has borne altogether too much, far more than its share, of taxes. The situation is aggravated because most of the tax load has been levied for local purposes. In a self-sufficing community there was little complaint on this score, but when children who were educated in the local school spend their productive lives in the city, when roads are built chiefly for intercommunity or city traffic

[8] Norton, L. J., "Financing Agriculture." Chapter XX.

and when the "business of the farm reaches across county, state, and national boundaries"—the burden of taxation should, likewise, be more widely distributed. The clamor from many quarters is for a system of taxation based on ability to pay and the income tax is pointed out as the one principal form of tax which would meet this objective.[9]

Economic institutions which are so closely linked with income need be scrutinized carefully by those whose life work it is to uphold righteousness. The church in many quarters has "tolerated" an unmoral or unethical system of business practices because many who profit from that system have been the mainstays of the church. Frequently the landlords, the farm operators in the higher economic levels, and the most successful business men have supported the church. Some of them have urged that an exploitive system of tenure is no concern of the church, that low wages paid to cotton pickers, higher interest charges to those having to borrow because they needed the money, were things outside and apart from morality and a Christian way of life. In so far as the church has condoned unfair practice in the economic institutional life, it has failed to fulfill the true mission of the church.

The Farm Family—the Basic Rural Institution

"The family is the most numerous and frequent social institution. The farm, itself a family affair predominantly, is the nearest competitor"—there being approximately 30 million families and six and one-half million farms in the United States in 1930. Farming is a family

[9] Hibbard, B. H., and Allen, B. W., "Tax Burdens Compared." Wis. Exp. Sta. Bull. 393.

business in that successful farming requires the coöperation of all members of the family. "The home stands out as the most important rural institution, when measured by standards of use and dependency, and family ties hold the chief place in the mesh of social relationships." Marriage comes earlier and divorce is less frequent in rural areas.[10]

The farm family is an important institution to the whole of society. From farm families come the young men and women who help the city grow in population; city families no longer are large enough to keep urban populations at an even number.[11] Farm families, however, are decreasing in size and in some sections faster than urban families.[12] The machine and urban influences have probably been the chief causes for this decline—the largest families are in the Old South and in general among those in the lower economic levels—the renters and sharecroppers.

Living standards in farm homes in America also have been changing. For some the change has been in the direction of provision of modern conveniences in the home; for others the substitution of "store bought" goods such as clothing, bread, and garden truck for home sewing, home-made bread, and the home garden; for still others the standard has been determined by what is left after the best is sold "to pay the mortgage" or to buy the next forty. Many farmers still look upon electric lights, run-

[10] Gillette, J. M., "Rural Sociology." Page 430. By permission of the Macmillan Company, publishers.

[11] Baker, O. E., "Future Population Prospect." Rural Sociology, Vol. 2, No. 2, page 139.

[12] Lindstrom, D. E., "Changes in Sizes of Families, Rural and Urban." Proceedings of the Ill. Acad. of Sci., 1938.

ning water, indoor toilets, bathrooms, furnace heat, and home beautification as secondary to production rather than to look upon production as a means to attain these things. Even the teachings of agricultural colleges have overemphasized production though home economics and rural sociology extension are now spreading rapidly. Farmers need to learn how to improve living standards as well as income. That higher living standards do not necessarily follow higher incomes is now recognized by many leaders; indeed, some of the finest types of life can be found on farms providing only moderate incomes.

The question of minimum standards of farm living is closely related to the extent of consumption in the nation—for farm families are recognized as providing a sizeable market for farm and factory. More important, however is the fact that minimum standards are also related to the quality of the nation's people—for farm families near the subsistence level provide a large share of the increase in population. Can a nation afford to recruit her surplus of population from the underfed and relatively uneducated masses?

Traditionally, the farm family has been looked upon as a producing unit. Recently writers have begun to emphasize the fact that all families are the basic consumption units in society. Howard F. Bigelow points out that "in the provision of the goods and services that we need to satisfy our wants, the family and not the individual is the consuming unit." He declares "the family does much more than merely pass on to its members the end products of industry as it receives them. It adds much to the utility of many of its purchases by further processing. It also can turn to an increase in home manufacture in

case the need arises." [13] Obviously when this happens—when prices of toys are too high and families make them at home—industry suffers a decrease in demand for its goods. The farm family is an institution in which the old maxim "to each according to his needs and from each according to his ability" has practical application, for it is the basic mutual aid group.

Farm families as consuming units have greater opportunities than city families to supplement their "use goods" purchased with goods made or revised at home. It is significant to note that recent studies have shown the most successful farm families to be those using the most home produced food. Many farm families on relief were found to have no home gardens whereas others in the same areas were "making a go of it," and found the garden an important factor in keeping off relief.[14] Farm families, also, do find it possible to "weather through" whereas city families who are out of work and whose resources soon become exhausted must either go on relief or go back to the farm. A Wisconsin study showed that "families in one county cut their purchased living costs by 41 per cent in the four-year period 1929 to 1933." [15] These studies concluded that these families used more food from the farm, sacrificed by not keeping up the buildings, restricted the use of the automobile and telephone, spent very little for furnishings, curtailed on clothing expenditures, spent as little as possible to protect health, reduced

[13] Bigelow, Howard F., "The Consumption Unit of Society—The Family." Annals of the Am. Acad. of Pol. Sci., March, 1938.

[14] Lindstrom, D. E., and Case, H. C. M., "Standards of Farming and Living in the Lick Creek Area." Mimeo. Pub., Uni. of Ill. Agr. Exp. Sta., 1938.

[15] Kolb and Brunner, *op. cit.*, page 384.

expenditures for reading, education, and recreation, organizations and church; actually borrowed some money for living costs, and pressed for lower taxes for schools and other governmental services.[16]

Methods used in making farming a success—the right rotation of crops, the proper amount and care of livestock, the doing of things in proper season (timing farm operations correctly) and other practices going along with good farming are likely, also, to go with good home life, neat yards and other things making life on the farm more attractive. Also, "more than one-half of the items contributing to a high standard of living required no cash outlay but rather depended upon use of time in the various family practices in arrangement and beautification of the home and its surroundings, and in participation in the educational, organizational, and recreational programs and activities of the community," reports a recent Michigan study.[17]

The rural church must have first concern for the family group. The farm family, as the human seed bed for the nation, must come into the thinking and concern of the city as well as the rural church. The pattern of family life on the farm is such that it is the natural center from which lessons in coöperation, brotherly love, and affection should come. A struggle for mere subsistence is likely to create feelings of envy, enmity, and bitterness among members of a family for whom the social and economic

[16] Kirkpatrick, E. L., *et al.*, "How Farm Families Met the Emergency." Res. Bull. 126, Wis. Agr. Exp. Sta., January, 1935, in "A Study of Rural Society." Page 385.

[17] Mumford, Eben, *et al.*, "The Standard of Living of Farm Families in Selected Michigan Communities." Special Bull. 287, Agr. Exp. Sta., Michigan State College, October, 1937.

order offer nothing but low wages and the necessity to go on relief. The church's first concern, then, should be for the economic security of the farm family. This concern projects the church immediately into helping struggle for equality of opportunity in the way of fair prices, modern schools, equitable systems of taxation, and efficient systems of distribution. It also projects the church into the task of helping see that the farmer is provided with information as to insect, disease, and other hazards besetting production on the farm to the end that it encourage the farmer to use the best methods possible. If "gospel" is good news then aid in finding solutions to these economic problems is gospel.

A church which sincerely desires to help insure the family a good type of life, as well as a sound economic base, has concern, also, for the non-material elements in living standards—home beautification, advanced schooling, contacts with the extension service, and encouragement of a participation in the things which will make the community a better place in which to live. It can work for the institutionalization of high standards of living which will reflect in better material as well as better social and spiritual life in the community.

The Part Played by Politics in Rural Life

An anathema has attached itself to the word "politics" —it has become linked with such concepts as "patronage," or "personal advantage" and even with "graft." [18] Morality seems to fly out of the window when political action comes in—so good men are urged to stay out of politics.

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[18] Bowden, Robert, "Boise Penrose." 1937.

The "game" of politics is played on a state, national, and international scale, but it has its roots in the local voting precinct. Many urban voters have been the "tool" of the politicians, whereas rural voters have remained an "unknown quantity." The "fixing" of the vote must be done in the local, closely-settled ward or precinct.

Members of many types of groups are very careful to "keep politics out" because they know that to allow politics to play a part is to invite partisanship and a possible split in the group. Yet these same people will tolerate a most vicious form of political maneuvering in their communities. A one-room school with less than five pupils may be kept open by a board in order that an incompetent teacher with kinship to one or more members of the board may remain employed. A township supervisor or road commissioner may be elected "because he needs it" or because a small group has personal interest in the "spoils" of the office, and not because the man is qualified to hold that office. For example, a certain road commissioner "paid his friends" by delivering crushed rock bought by public funds to improve their private roads in return for the votes they secured for him. Also, people in certain townships in Illinois refused to vote a road improvement bond issue because they wouldn't trust the road commissioner and yet continued to reëlect him because no one else would run for the job.

Problems in improving rural government are myriad but they will not be solved by politicians of the usual type. Some of the most significant of these problems on which citizens must work are: The increasing cost of state and local government which is aggravated by political patronage; lack of efficiency due to poorly qualified

officials because no qualifications are set up for elective officers and examinations held for appointive offices are inadequate or are not required, the appointments being made by the "party in power" as a result of previous "good work" done for the party; the duplication and overlapping of units of administration and the lack of coördination between them as, for example, the giving of direct relief by one agency, blind pensions by another, old-age assistance by another, etc., with no clearance between them;[19] the inequalities in systems of taxation and the evils growing out of them, such as favoritism shown in assessments, failure to levy on intangibles and transfers of wealth to non-taxable forms; the existence of local sentiment in keeping undemocratic and uneconomic units of local government in existence.

Reforms in local government must begin with the citizen who has the welfare of the community at heart. Selfishness and desire for personal gain or patronage should be eliminated and officials should be selected by the whole people on the basis of their qualifications to discharge the duty in question. Reforms in the political life of the nation must likewise begin with the average citizen who looks at his obligation from a moral or ethical point of view, insisting upon fairness in selecting officials and then insisting on the most equitable and efficient discharge of those duties possible.[20]

The church thus has an obligation in the field of politics and local government—to see that Christian principles

[19] Johns, Ida, *et al.*, "Rural Relief in Selected Areas of Illinois." Mimeo. Pub. of the Uni. of Ill. Agr. Exp. Sta., 1937.

[20] Cole, W. E., and Crowe, H. P., "Recent Trends in Rural Planning." Page 484.

guide. Rural areas are the bulwark against radicalism in government; hence, the whole church should aid people in rural areas to work out systems of political action which will insure proper selection, just representation and effective discharge of duties. It should insist that the system of patronage and other evils must go and clean government result.

Educational Institutions and Forces Affecting Them

"The little red schoolhouse" symbolizes rural education for many people. Americans, with their democratic ideals, looked to the setting up of the school as one of the first group necessities. America has grown up to give all of her children the opportunity to get an education, be it grade school or college. Education as an institution, today embraces not only the idea of passing tradition on to the children, but now encompasses following the child through manhood and giving him the chance to get education all of his life.

In rural areas the institution includes the open-country or village grade school, the township or community high school, then vocational night schools or the chance to go to college, and take part in extension work provided by the state university through county farm and home advisers or agents. Churches, schools, and local social organizations are participating in increasing numbers in this system by organizing discussion groups, calling community meetings, arranging for institutes, or having special programs.

Integration and coördination of all the educational forces of the community is a desirable ideal. The people are confused when numerous demands are made upon them

by unrelated groups all working on "educational" programs. Frequently these take on the form of propaganda for the advancement of a special interest under the guise of an educational program. A church may have its "educational" nights to inform the people of the advantages of its program; a farm organization may wish to "educate" the farmers and townspeople as to its program and the various lodges and social clubs, likewise, wish to "educate" the people in their lore. The schools, meantime, proceed blithely to "educate" the children and through parent and teacher groups to keep the parents educated.

In spite of all the educational influences to which the average citizen is exposed, school people claim the schools are backward because the citizen takes no interest in its reform; the church leaders call attention to the "unchurched" and point to the empty pews as an example of their apathy; the 4H club, farmer and homemaker programs put on through the extension service in coöperation with farm organizations tend to be selective; [21] and the lodges and social clubs struggle to keep up attendance at their meetings. In the meanwhile movies in the larger towns are well attended and taverns increase in number.

The task of reform, sorely needed in rural America, is a difficult one.[22] Churches cannot remain aloof and still serve adequately as institutions advocating and encouraging the abundant life. Rural churches are the "melting

[21] Lindstrom, D. E., and Dawson, W. M., "Selectivity of 4H Club Work." Bull. 426, Uni. of Ill. Agr. Exp. Sta.

[22] "Report of the Committee." Advisory Committee on Education, Gov. Ptg. Office, Washington, D. C., February, 1938.

pots" for many otherwise unrelated groups in the community. Study and discussion of the educational problems among the members would be the least that could be done. Interchurch efforts to bring about a greater coördination of the educational efforts of various groups through vacation Bible schools, non-sectarian discussion groups and community meetings held in coöperation with the school and the extension service, based on well formulated plans, could be worked out in many rural communities. Relating the program of the church to such an integrated program would doubtless result in a more virile and effective church in the community. Then the church would be in a position to help equalize educational opportunities by urging equalized financial support and advocating the reorganization of schools and school curriculum so that they will become community institutions where all may go for educational advantages, the youth mingling with adults in a process of continuing education.

The Institutions of Communication in Modern Rural Life

A young man on his father's farm can do the chores, get dressed, pick up his sweetheart, go to a movie in the county-seat town 40 miles away and get back home at least by midnight of the same day. A busy farmer can call, telegraph, or even send a radiogram half way across the continent in less time than it once took him to post a letter.

The automobile, newspaper, telephone, radio, and hard road have had significant effects on the entire life of the farm family. Reports from central markets are followed closely by hundreds of farmers. Meetings on improved

farm practices can be attended in centers 10, 20, or 50 miles away.[23] And so the local community center may become forlorn because of the attraction of "outside" interests for so many of the families in the locality.

The trend for a time in the twenties and early thirties was away from community and to the county and larger area activities, particularly economic in nature. Regional creameries, county livestock shipping associations, and district electric coöperatives are becoming common today. But the recent trend, particularly for social organization, is back to the community—the community unit, the school, and the church—and to some extent for economic organization, as branches of oil coöperatives and cold storage lockers become established in the community.

The church must recognize these trends and study their implication—not only for religion but for education, government, and other institutions functioning in rural life.

Religious Institutions in Rural Life

Freedom to worship as one chooses, where and when one chooses is an institution deeply implanted in America; the privilege is granted by the state. The result has been a rapid development of denominational groups. The history of the development of denominations in this country is rich in human interest. Probably the strongest denominations in the United States came out of European backgrounds — the Catholic, Lutheran, and Methodist. One cannot speak of the church in America without realizing that it is not one church, but that it is religion expressed through many churches. Yet each regards itself

[23] Lindstrom, D. E., "Forces Affecting Participation of Farm People in Rural Organization." Bull. 423, Uni. of Ill. Agr. Exp. Sta.

as "the church." Religion in the modern American community is thus represented not by one but by numerous voices, each proclaiming his as the true salvation. Sharp differences have arisen, as would be expected, from groups having come to America to escape religious dictatorship. These differences have tended to divide the people and to open the way for the greatest weakness in the church—a failure to act upon its commandments to "love one another," keep from "bearing false witness," and to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

The tireless efforts of a particular church to indoctrinate its members so that the church may continue its existence have probably had greater effect on rural than on urban peoples. Many good church members of one denomination would think it, possibly not sacrilege, but something akin to it to step inside the doors of another denomination. Hence, religion has tended to cloister itself from life. Churches have thus lost many members, there has been a secularization of life and "today the enormous skyscrapers, devoted to commerce and finance, make (churches) appear trivial and unimportant to the average man of affairs." [24] The most serious problems of the church are, thus, probably within the organizational set-up—the church has become too much of an end rather than a means to an end.

The lack of training and ability on the part of pastors serving rural churches has been pointed out as one of its greatest weaknesses. This is related to inadequate support and reflects a sort of secularization among the ministry, for when a man gets a better offer in a larger place he leaves the rural church. One cannot condemn the men;

[24] Cole and Crowe, *op. cit.*, page 454.

the church is at fault in not recognizing the need for adequate support in all the churches through a system providing an equitable basis for support based on size of family, differences in cost of living, and other factors.[25] With the present complicated and confused state of church organization this probably cannot be accomplished except through denominations. Were pastors trained especially for the rural field, with a thorough understanding of rural problems and their ethical implications, doubtless much of the prestige now seemingly lost to the rural church could be regained—the church might well become a new center of rural institutional life.

Rural churches seek more members—they need them to operate properly. With small congregations which are diminishing, the cost of upkeep is too high. So buildings become run-down, resident pastors are let go, visiting pastors come in, the church competes with other churches in the community for support and finally the church ceases to operate.

Many reasons are given for this trend: the atmosphere of the church is cold, increasing tenancy causes instability of membership, and people have lost interest or have been "weaned away" by the school or other community activities. All denominations in rural areas are faced with these problems and numerous groups have sought remedies. Many "community" churches have been organized—federated, denominational, non-denominational or

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[25] Hunt, M. C., "Civilization is for Man." Religion and Life, summer number, 1936, page 414. See also Lieffer, Murray H., "Standards of Living in the Ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church." Published by the Board of Pensions and Relief, 222 West Adams Street, Chicago.

affiliated.[26] The larger parish plan has been strongly recommended. Some churches in the open-country have adopted a church-acre plant in which products "from an acre on each farm" are brought to the church and auctioned. Some denominations are allotting areas for work. Others are developing inter-faith relations.[27] Hence, the field for improvement is open. Short-courses at colleges of agriculture, a more equitable support of ministers, coöperation with other agencies, and inter-church coöperation in rural areas could all be helpful. Thus it may be that the church can again become a vital force in rural life, existing, not for itself, but for all the people of the community—for those who choose to become members through its church program and for others through participation in a community-wide program.

The Institutionalizing of Aesthetic and Expressional Behavior

The quest for security and economic means in America has pauperized art. Yet rural life abounds in the most artistic in life—natural forms. In earlier days many rural dwellings were erected for beauty as well as for utility (as in the Atlantic states); when utensils were made in the home they were often objects of art and were admired and prized possessions. Some semblance of a return of interest in art seems to be coming into rural life; camps for young people now provide for work in metal, leather, wood, and sketching. Rural music and drama groups are beginning to produce the better forms of music and

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[26] *Ibid.*, page 472.

[27] Dawber, Mark A., "Rebuilding Rural America." 1937, pages 83-90.

drama. Probably with the help of churches, schools, and other agencies art can again become a form of expression for all the people.

Rural people traditionally have been relatively inarticulate. Yet the stronghold of democracy is in the rural community for the farmer has time to think—to reflect. Working with the forces of nature tends to teach him to think for himself. The forms of expression, however, are still inadequate. The modern developments—radio and newspaper—have tended to crowd out old forms of expression—the old town hall meeting has largely disappeared.

Issues need to be discussed, however, and revival of old forms of group expression, as well as new developments, are needed to make our rural folks realize that there are many things they can do together to solve mutual problems. Farmers today are getting expression but it is still too much the expression of leaders, many of them self-appointed. Educational institutions are tending to create a few channels of expression—many community meetings are being held, small gatherings in farm homes are not uncommon and churches and schools are providing increasing opportunities for discussion. The democratic form of government will be strengthened—bolstered—by an institutionalization of discussion among the masses of American people. Farm folks have the environment in which such an institution can be and is now being nurtured.

The Institutions for the Use of Leisure in Rural Life

A new meaning is being manufactured for the word "leisure" and for what may be done with it. An idea

often heard among older rural folk that work is sacred and play is sin seems to keep its foothold only among a few of strictly orthodox turns of mind. That creative play is essential to the full development of the whole man is recognized by schools and colleges in the organization of their curriculums,[28] and churches realize the socializing value of play which is conducted in accordance with their ideas of decency and moral rectitude.

The masses of Americans, however, look upon the commercial forms of amusement as the most available manner of using leisure time. Huge sums are spent for movies, public dances, professional athletics, racing, and fighting (boxing) which have tended to develop a habit which has all but become institutionalized and which has been called "spectatoritis." Thrills, betting, and a comfortable way of killing time are provided by these forms of recreation. In the small town and rural community three forms of commercial amusements are almost universal, namely, the movie, the pool hall, and the tavern. These are supplemented by carnivals of questionable character brought in by special interest groups desiring to raise money; their efforts are implemented by political access to the town officials so that permits are easily available. Also, poorly regulated dance halls and roller skating rinks, erected almost overnight, often of canvas, help contribute to the causes for delinquency in the rural community. Yet many small towns, particularly, provide little in the way of an organized program of social and physical recreation for its people.

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[28] See Lindeman, Eduard C., "Youth and Leisure." Annals of the Am. Acad. of Pol. and Soc. Sci., November, 1937.

Recently, the WPA has stimulated some of the town leaders to take on summer programs and to provide supervised play centers for winter months, but this movement is still very much in its infancy and is looked upon as a temporary expedient. Many larger cities have actually appropriated money for recreation facilities and programs, many stimulated by the National Recreation Association; evils have crept into some of these programs in the form of political favoritism and the pressure of so-called tax-paying bodies to reduce taxes by cutting out the appropriations. These tax payers fail to count the cost of the lack of adequate and properly conducted recreational programs in the growth and spread of crime and delinquency which has its incidence in the improper use of leisure time by boys and sometimes girls in small town and city alleys, streets, beer joints, burlesque shows, taverns, road houses, pool halls, night clubs, race tracks, dance halls (staging walkathons, etc.), and the numerous forms of questionable activities run for profit.

The leisure time of youth is frequently taken, also, in loafing on the streets. There they are besieged with barrages of lewd magazines. If we are to think seriously about these things we must admit that such influences, together with the difficulty of getting jobs and the necessity for postponing marriage, have much to do with the shockingly large number of young people who have had sex experience before marriage.[29]

This situation is a definite challenge to the church. The complaint has been voiced numerous times that churches find it difficult to hold young people. Small wonder when

[29] Rainey, Homer P., *et al.*, "How Fare American Youth?" The American Council of Education, 1938, page 140.

the program of so many churches is built to appeal to the age of senility and the whims of narrow-minded church fathers lacking a real interest in youth. The situation is further aggravated even for the church which is trying to modernize its program because of a closely guarded school program of extra-curricular activities; it is a sad commentary of the situation when the church has to bargain with the school for the time of the young people—yet the other attractions mentioned above continue to thrive. The institution of commercial recreation is with us and we must live with it. We can fight it—refuse to allow carnivals to come into town, for example; this is not enough. Other forms of recreational opportunity must be provided.

Social recreation is a growing institution in rural areas but its forms are changing from corn husking bees to corn husking contests, from singing schools to music festivals, and from literary societies to drama tournaments and discussion groups. The mechanization of agriculture brings a new desire for rhythmic games; folk dances are again becoming popular in rural America. Youths and adults in rural areas take vacation trips, go to camps and often leave fishing and hunting to city enthusiasts. Rural sports—soft ball, track, baseball, horseshoes—are encouraged by the extension service and farmers' organizations. State and county fairs are making a place for amateur music, drama, and sports activities on their programs and farmers' picnics, county-wide, are numerous. A new, healthful and invigorating type of recreation is coming into the rural areas.

Institutions for the Protection of Health

The farm can no longer be called the most healthful place on which to live, because modern methods of protection have been made more available to town than to country folks. To many farm people, calling the doctor comes as a last resort and hospitalization comes only as an emergency. Many mothers in rural areas are still denied hospital care at childbirth. Institutions for the protection of health and the prevention of disease seem to be developing but slowly in rural areas.

The old idea that every child must have mumps, measles, smallpox, diphtheria, typhoid fever, whooping cough, and all the child diseases in order to be a normal child still prevails in some areas. Measures to protect children from many of these diseases are now available. By proper immunization before the child is five years old, he can be protected against typhoid, diphtheria, scarlet fever, smallpox, whooping cough, and preventive measures are now being perfected to prevent children from having other contagious diseases. An important task of rural leaders, as in urban areas, is to help rural people see that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"; irreparable damage may result from only a slight case of scarlet fever, and diphtheria is too often fatal.

Public health services are expanding to include all the people but they are still inadequate for the average rural community. The health officer should be a good doctor but too often he is a well-meaning but ignorant public officer. People still hide the fact that contagious disease has broken out in the family, thus jeopardizing the whole community through its schools and churches.

"We pay our doctors to keep us well," is reported to be a boast of the "heathen Chinese." The more common American method is to see the doctor only when sickness comes. That institution, could it be changed to hiring doctors to keep us well, would save rural people's lives as well as money, and stabilize the medical profession in rural areas. Possibly it will be done through coöperation as it has been done in other countries;[30] let it be done.

The church looks upon the body as "the temple of the living God"; yet many churches blind themselves to ways and means of aiding "secular" agencies in keeping that body clean and wholesome. To quicken the minds and consciences of people to their duties to themselves and their fellow-men in preserving health is one approach. To actively coöperate in sponsoring campaigns, for example, is a more effective approach for it combines precept with practice. The church is thus in a strategic position to preach and practice health protection; its health program could bolster its emphasis upon temperance; it then would have a vital and practical approach.

Social Welfare Institutions in Rural Life

The church once took care of those who could not take care of themselves. Almsgiving is still a method whereby some religious people hope to pave their way into heaven. Today, however, the state has taken over almost the entire responsibility for those who cannot earn a living for themselves.

Public aid for paupers came into being with old English poor laws during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, before

[30] "New Plans of Medical Service." The Julius Rosenwald Fund, Chicago, 1936, describes plans for group hospitalization, dental, medical, and health services.

we had public education. Laws in colonial America were not unlike those of Queen Elizabeth's time; even recent laws in some states are on no better pattern. Requirements for pauper relief administration are very similar—to require legal residence for a certain length of time in the locality on a self-supporting basis and to treat with "humanity and afford the necessary attention and comforts of life fitted to his condition." [31]

"Relief" is the modern term used for public assistance. It has become one of the greatest issues before the American people—both rural and urban—because of its direct relation to the lack of security offered in private enterprise. Only a very small per cent of the people on work or direct relief are there because of physical or mental disability—they can't find jobs. Yet, America's capacity to produce is still unrealized; one-half of the most efficient farmers in the best areas, using modern methods, could produce all the food and fibre the people of the nation need. The opportunity to create "use goods" which is the only true wealth and to exchange them for necessities of life are denied almost ten per cent of the employable people of the nation; and the distribution of "use goods" already available is so maladjusted that factories are being closed and farmers urged to reduce production to avoid severe financial losses. Thus the "relief" problem is a major national problem. It will be solved only when short-sighted economic policies are eliminated and the productive agencies "produce for use" [32] and share whatever profits there may be with those who help in production.

[31] Smith-Hurd, "Revised Statutes for Illinois." 1937.

[32] Moulton, Harold G., "Income and Economic Progress." Especially Chapter II.

Relief is more than an urban problem. During the depression at least 3.5 million, or more than one in four rural families in the United States had received public assistance at some time. It is estimated that one-third of the farm families are on standards of living so low as to make them slum families.[33] A study of rural relief made in eleven counties in Illinois showed a range of from 4.4 per cent to 23.8 per cent of all families on relief in 1936.[34]

Can our methods of handling relief change? Certainly no political influence should be allowed in its administration, yet it is now being administered in some states by those interested in being reëlected. It is costly enough so that it should be handled by trained workers, yet few of the workers in rural localities have ever had any training in social case work. The problem is acute enough that every citizen should understand the problem and use his influence in its most effective handling. Yet the average citizen has no interest beyond pointing a finger of derision at efforts of alleviation (work projects) and to place the "reliefer" in a class by himself. The result is an inefficient and costly system, a destroying of the morale of many on relief and the setting up of a new class in America—the disadvantaged.

Social welfare provisions now apply to those not able to take care of themselves—they include, as well, the incapacitated, delinquent, and the anti-social—insane, in-

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[33] Taylor, Carl C., *et al.*, "Disadvantaged Classes in American Agriculture." Social Research Report No. VIII, BAE and FSA, U. S. D. A., 1938.

[34] Lindstrom, D. E., and Johns, Ida, "A Study of Home Assistance in Rural Illinois." Uni. of Ill. Agr. Exp. Sta. Pub. (in manuscript).

corrigibles, and criminals. The cost for the care of this group is huge and it is growing. One state is spending 45 million dollars a year for the support of welfare institutions other than direct and work relief—about six dollars per capita. The population of the social welfare institutions has doubled since 1912. "On every side we see the ruins of old ideals," declares A. L. Bowen.[35] "It becomes increasingly difficult to raise money for private agencies and institutions and they flounder about in confusion. . . . 'Let the state do it' has become a general reply to all appeals."

"Even unto the least of these" is the command to the church on social welfare. The task is two-fold—to help prevent people from needing such assistance and to help all agencies care for them adequately—humanely. The state rarely gives aid beyond that necessary to keep the body nurtured at a minimum level. The church should lead out in seeing that more than the body is kept intact—that the unfortunates do not lose their morale, their spirit—their souls.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How important is it that people generally understand the full meaning and significance of institutions as defined by sociologists, for example, the institution of private property?
2. What are some of the economic institutions of your community which need changing and what could be done to change them?
3. What other institutions of the community have become ends in themselves? In what ways? What should and could be done to change them into "service institutions"?

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[35] Bowen, A. L., "State Department of Public Welfare." In the Twentieth Annual Report of the Department of Public Welfare, Illinois, 1937, page 43.

4. What new institutions are forming in the community? How are they affecting present institutions? What adjustments should be made? How can they be made?
5. Has the church become too institutionalized in the community? In what ways? How should the church influence other institutions of the community?

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CHAPTER IV

FARMERS' ORGANIZATIONS

The Origin and Development of Various Forms

Three general types of organized endeavor among farmers grew up in America: (1) The agricultural societies, fairs, and clubs grew up immediately after the Revolutionary War and gave rise to many governmental efforts to improve the technical aspects of agriculture;[1] (2) the general farmers' organizations, many making up the earliest farmer movements, had their origin in and following the Civil War period; and (3) farmers coöperatives which had their first real impetus in the period following 1895, though many coöperative activities developed with the various farmer movements, a large number of which failed, some of which succeeded, and all of which contributed to the knowledge of what to do to make coöperative organizations successful.

Agricultural societies followed the English pattern and included the landed gentry. Many of these associations stressed improving farm practices, while some developed around a particular culture like horticulture. Out of them grew breed associations and crop and soil associations; they afforded much of the impetus for the formation of the United States Department of Agriculture.[2]

Farmers' fairs were copied directly from England and were set up to show and sell livestock and other agricul-

[1] True, Alfred C., "A History of Agricultural Experimentation and Research in the United States." Misc. Pub. No. 251, U. S. D. A., July, 1937, page 6.

[2] Wiest, Edward, "Agricultural Organization in the United States." Page 5.

tural products. They were frequently gala affairs. The modern-day community, county, and state fairs, combining the showing of agricultural products and, more or less, an opportunity for festive celebrations, trace their origins to these early fairs. Many modern fairs have become so highly commercialized that most of what might be called the "folk" element has almost died out.

Farmers' clubs, particularly as they developed in the Mid-West immediately prior to the Civil War, provided a pattern for the local structure of farmers' organizations which came later.[3] They were neighborhood groups which provided the farmers (the whole family attended the meetings) the opportunity of discussing their everyday problems, and were an important socializing medium, for they brought farm families of all creeds, nationalities, and political affiliations together on common ground.[4]

The Civil War brought about a great rise in the general price level due partly to scarcity of economic goods, but primarily to the issue of greenbacks. Their rapid recovery in value after the Civil War together with increased production soon caused a decline in the general price level.[5] S. J. Buck affirmed that "the causes for the serious agricultural situation at the time are to be sought primarily in economic conditions, and to a less extent in political, social, and intellectual conditions affecting the American farmer." [6] This was a period of expansion—the Homestead Act was passed to encourage settle-

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[3] Lindstrom, D. E., "Local Organization Among Farm People." Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Uni. of Wis.

[4] Periam, Jonathan, "The Groundswell." Chapter V.

[5] Wiest, Edward, *op. cit.*, page 368.

[6] Buck, Solon J., "The Granger Movement." Page 3.

ment on new lands. The railroads were being built at a rapid rate—they were given grants of land by the government—every alternate section along the right-of-way for several miles back from the railroad.

Regionalism in the United States caused serious conflicts, not only before and during but after the Civil War. North and South still existed. Overproduction of cotton and heavy mortgages burdened the South. The whites were helpless without their slaves and much of their land was badly war-torn. The Mid-West with its free land began to produce grain, particularly wheat, cheaper than the Northeast where land was less productive and where more economic means of production could not be used so well. The West and Northwest were just being settled and were later to become fruit, forest, and extensive grain areas.

Farmers of the Mid-West wanted the railroads and helped induce them to come by buying railroad stocks, even mortgaging their land to buy them. The coming of the railroads gave rise to grievances. Court decisions went against the farmers when they tried to force the railroads to charge uniform and fair rates. The Dartmouth College case, for example, held that railroads were privately owned businesses and therefore that the state could in no way interfere. Rate discrepancies continued; passes and other favors were given to Congressmen in return for protective legislation, and some railroads gave them stocks to keep their favor.[7]

Prices of corn and wheat fell to such low proportions that freight rates ate up all the profits. As an extreme, farmers in midwestern states burned corn for fuel.

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[7] *Ibid.*, pages 9 to 15.

The post Civil War period also brought to focus many conflicts with merchants and middlemen. Farmers accused them of buying far below the true market price and selling as high as possible. The farmer bought and sold at prices quoted by someone else. Machinery prices went up, taxes soared, interest rates rose and debts increased. The rapid expansion westward put more and more agricultural products on the markets, increasing production and lowering prices. Every farmer felt he must increase his own production so as to make enough at lower prices both to pay his debts and living expenses. Farmers had but a small representation in Congress so that their pleas for favorable legislation went more or less unheeded.

These and other conditions were the seed-bed for an agrarian revolution. The impetus was given through the organization of the Grange—which was started as result of recognition by a government clerk, O. H. Kelley, of the social and economic plight of the southern farmer. The organization was started as a secret order, based on the pattern of the Masonic order, and included all members of the family 16 years of age and over in its membership.[8]

The organization was slow to develop until coöperative purchasing of supplies and agricultural implements was started by Grangers in Minnesota. About 1870 the orders spread rapidly through New England, the Central West, and California. Many Granges in the Mid-West took up the fight to secure cheaper transportation and soon was the chief group working against extortion by the middleman, high interest rates, and monopolies. The

[8] Buck, S. J., *op. cit.*, Chapter II.

organization had grown so rapidly that by 1874 there was a Grange for about every 18 square miles in Indiana and one for every 84 persons in Kansas.

Due to inner dissension, a mushroom growth, and unfortunate business enterprises, by 1880 the order declined. It has since revived and now has a membership from more than 200,000 farm families.

The Farmers' Alliance, a part of the Granger Movement, now extinct, became active soon after the Grange fell into decline. It was the nucleus out of which the Populist Movement grew which came so near establishing a third political party with Bryan in the 1890's. It originated in Texas as the Southern Alliance; a movement grew up in the north central states which became the Northern Alliance. Both groups, separately at first, then together, centered their attention on railroad problems, taxation, efforts to secure favorable legislation for farmers, and the development of coöperative efforts. Many of the coöperative enterprises failed because of poor management, difficulty of getting credit from antagonistic banking concerns, and failure of farmer patrons to pay cash and remain loyal to their coöperatives. The culminating blow was the failure to form a third party—part of which was due to the fact that many Grange members, who had gone along until this time, removed their support.[9]

Other movements of farmers in the period before 1900 included the Non-Partisan League of North Dakota which was able to dominate the political organization of the state and set up state-owned banks and mills.[10] The

[9] Hicks, J. D., "The Populist Movement." Chapters 4 and 5.

[10] Hibbard, B. H., "Marketing Agricultural Products." Chapter XXII.

American Society of Equity became active late in the period, concentrating its activity on the establishment of farmers' coöperative elevators.[11]

Following the period of hard times in the '90's a new farmers' organization grew up which, like the Grange, has had a significant influence on the present agricultural situation—the Farmers' Union. The rise of the American Federation of Labor furnished a pattern of organization copied by farmers in Texas who formed Unions; their first efforts were to get better prices for cotton and other products and in other ways protect farmers' interests. Farmers' unions soon were engaging in coöperative purchasing of farm supplies as well as coöperative selling through pooling and other means. Many of these coöperative ventures failed because of poor management, operation on too low margins and the opposition of vested interests.[12] Some outstanding coöperatives have lasted through the years, however, as the ones at Omaha and St. Paul.[13]

The Farm Bureau, third in point of time of the three great farm organizations, came in a period of relative prosperity; it started, not as an organization to seek redress of wrongs, but to provide a means of education. One of the first county farm bureaus, organized in New York State, was given the help of governmental agencies in bringing knowledge of improved practices to farmers. The first efforts came before 1910, but the greatest growth has

[11] *Ibid.*, Chapter XX.

[12] Fisher, C. B., "The Farmers' Union." Pages 8 to 48.

[13] See Joyce, Alice, "The Work of Our Hands." Published by the Farmers' Union Coöperative Education Service, Jamestown, N. D., for a recent historical statement of the Farmers' Union. The present estimated membership (1938) is about 90,000 members.

come since 1914, when the Smith-Lever Act was passed for the establishment of agricultural extension work.[14] The membership had grown to 566,000 paid-up members in the national organization in 1921; this represented farm families and thus was about ten per cent of all farm families in the United States.

The citrus fruit grower coöperatives in California, starting about 1895, set the pace for the rapid spread of farmer coöperative organization in the United States during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Though many coöperatives did succeed as a result of the activities of the Grange, the Farmers' Union, the Alliance, the Equity, and other similar organizations, yet the spread of producer coöperation had not become a real factor in American agriculture until after 1900.[15]

The Program and Activities of Present-Day Organizations

The Grange is still very active. It has a membership of 625,000;[16] these include everyone in the family 16 years and over who pay dues. The chief strength of the Grange is in the northeastern states as far west as Ohio and in the northwestern states, particularly Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. Its local units, the subordinate Granges, meet twice a month, frequently in their own halls. Through local, county, state, and national gatherings the organization has built up a distinctive program. Though holding some in common with the Farm

[14] Kile, O. M., "The Farm Bureau Movement." Chapters 7 to 10.

[15] Bakken, H. H., and Schaars, M. A., "The Economics of Coöperative Marketing." Page 46.

[16] From a letter from Harry A. Caton, Secretary of the National Grange, April, 1938.

Bureau and a few with the Farmers' Union, it is at variance with both on some very important points. During the twenties it had its own legislative program, coming out for the Debenture plan as contrasted to the McNary-Haugen bill, sponsored by the Farm Bureau and the Cost of Production principle advocated by the Farmers' Union.

The Farmers' Union, on the other hand, has had a checkered career. Its membership has been said to vary from 800,000 members downward. Wide differences have come between organizations in the various states. In some, as in Iowa and Illinois, Farmers' Union members have been the nucleus from which direct action groups have come, such as the Farm Holiday Association, the agitation for farm mortgage moratoria, mob action against foreclosures and the instigation of "penny" sales. Much public attention has been turned toward the "farm problem" as result of these "direct action" movements. In other states, as in the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma, the organization has been more conservative and as a whole has a constructive program.

The American Farm Bureau Federation became active early in its history in national legislation through the Farm Bloc—a group of congressmen who pledged to support farm legislation, irrespective of party. Much needed legislation came out of this coalition during the twenties, particularly that which favored coöperatives and the support of agricultural education, such as appropriations for Land Grant Colleges and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Many efforts have been made to combine the efforts of these farm organizations. Among recent successful efforts

was that of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in asking that all of them join in the formulation of bills for agriculture in 1933, which resulted in the enactment of the Agricultural Adjustment Act. The Act as passed in 1933 had elements of the national programs of all three organizations as well as those of the National Coöperative Council.[17] After the Supreme Court declared the old AAA, with its processing taxes, to be unconstitutional, the farm organizations began to develop differences, though they all still favor some of the major principles. All four groups favor soil conservation and government aid in raising farm prices; they differ on the methods. The Farm Bureau is willing to accept compulsory control as voted by the farmers themselves; the Grange is opposed to compulsion in any form; the Farmers' Union lays greatest stress on the need for "cost of production, plus," a program of refinancing farm mortgages and the further support of farm debt moratoriums.[18] The National Coöperative Council gives its major support to improving legislation affecting coöperatives.

The combined action of these great farmer organizations can be effective in securing favorable legislation for farmers, as illustrated by the 1933 Agricultural Adjustment Act, the credit machinery set up for farmers, and the support of educational institutions such as Agricultural Extension, Smith-Hughes, and similar measures. Each, in its own way, has had some effect—the Farm

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[17] See the Coöperative Journal, the 1939 Blue Book of the National Coöperative Council, Vol. XIII, No. 1, January-February, 1939, for a statement of its program.

[18] See the Union Farmer, Vol. 57, No. 43, April 20, 1938, for a statement of the platform.

Bureau played almost a lone hand in the enactment of the 1938 Agricultural Conservation Bill.[19] The Grange took leadership in getting extensions and keeping interest rates on mortgages held by Federal Land Banks down to four per cent.[20] The Farmers' Union was active in getting time on moratoriums extended.

All three farm organizations supported legislation for coöperatives, both consumer and producer. Each, likewise, is strong in certain sections, hence the coöperatives set up reflect the policies of the organization supporting the action.

Economic coöperation among farmers in the United States, like that in Europe, came out of economic necessity, but unlike the movement in certain European countries, notably Denmark, it had no religious undergirding. Coöperation in America has been mostly producer coöperation and principally among farmer groups. Only in the last decade or two has coöperation arisen to any extent among the urban classes. Most effort has been put forth among farmers, particularly upon marketing products coöperatively, though many purchasing coöperatives were organized among early farm organizations—the Grange, Alliance and Farmers' Union principally. The most recent developments in coöperation in America have been along consumer lines, primarily for such things as telephone service, electricity, cold storage, and purchase of farm production supplies—gasoline, oil, paints, seeds, and fertilizer—and also for credit and insurance.

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[19] "The American Farm Bureau Federation in 1937." Annual Report to the House of Delegates, Chicago, 1937.

[20] Journal of Proceedings of the Twenty-first Annual Session of the National Grange, the National Grange Monthly, Springfield, Ohio.

Trends are toward larger units and thus fewer coöperatives, doing a larger business and becoming more selective and less personal in their methods. Very few were lost during the depression; the largest number ceasing operation were local independent concerns, mostly located in the southern and middle Atlantic states.[21] The Farm Credit Administration listed more than 15,000 farmer-owned and farmer-controlled coöperative associations and mutual companies in the United States, with a total estimated membership of more than three million in 1937.[22] Seventy per cent of the associations in 1935 were in the twelve north central states; these represented 63.3 per cent of the total membership.[23]

The National Coöperative Council, one of the two national bodies representing the coöperative movement in the United States, represents 4,000 associations with 1,700,000 farmer members; these associations handled between $1,250,000,000 and $1,350,000,000 worth of products in 1938.[24] The Coöperative League of the United States of America "contains within its membership the best coöperative societies in the United States." [25] It is a member of the International Coöperative Alliance. Member societies, numbering about 1,600, had a mem-

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[21] Brunner, Edmund, and Lorge, Irving, "Rural Trends in Depression Years." Page 60.

[22] Hyre, F. M., *et al.*, "A Statistical Handbook of Farmers' Coöperatives." FCA Bull. No. 26, page 1.

[23] Ellsworth, R. H., "Statistics of Farmers' Coöperative Business Organizations." FCA Bull. No. 6, page 16.

[24] The 1939 Blue Book of the National Coöperative Council, page 22.

[25] Warbasse, J. P., "A Brief History of the Coöperative League of the U. S. A." The Coöperative League Yearbook, 1936, page 23.

bership of about 600,000 in 1935.[26] The functions of the Coöperative League are "to do those things of a national educational nature which cannot be done as well by the local retail associations, the wholesale or the district educational leagues."[27]

Coöperation and The Church

Should coöperatives put business or service first? Is coöperation "a Christian way out"? Is it true that coöperatives which have been properly managed—have made it a business—have been most successful in the United States? They have increased their business and have continued to make a profit for the members, at the same time providing quality products and acting as a check on price and quality of goods handled by private concerns. For some coöperation is a cold-blooded business, for they hold that coöperatives in this country must compete with other types of business organizations. Hence coöperatives have been another form of business organization set up in competition with organizations already in existence. They are a check or whip to keep private business in line and carrying on fair practices at a reasonable profit. This is, quite largely, the producer point of view. Hence, it does not matter so much if the principles allow for one man one vote, open membership, limited returns on capital, division of profits on the basis of patronage, and no dividends on stock purchased. In the United States the Capper-Volstead law defines limitations. Laxity in some of these things have been carried too far, previous to such

[26] Bowen, E. R., "The Work of the Coöperative League." The Coöperative Yearbook, 1936, page 25.

[27] The Coöperative League Yearbook, 1936, page 255.

legislation; many farmers' elevators permitted the voting stock to be bought up by a few individuals or groups and became non-coöperative corporations. Some farm organizations have safeguarded themselves against this trend by keeping control of coöperatives set up by the farm organizations in the hands of the farm organization. At the same time, a system of differentials is worked out so that members of the farm organization participate more in patronage refunds than do non-members. In Illinois, some coöperatives set up by the Farm Bureaus grant voting membership in the coöperative only to Farm Bureau members operating farms.

The consumer philosophy, which emanated from the Rochdale weavers in England and is championed by the National Coöperative League, would hold membership open, and grant power of voting to each member irrespective of stock owned; it declares that such are the only true coöperative principles and coöperatives operating differently either must fail or soon become private enterprises.[28]

Church people generally have given more ear to the latter, not understanding as well as they should the former philosophy of coöperation. Churches which operate in rural areas should try first to understand the philosophy of the coöperative systems which have been operating in rural life and help them to avoid getting out of line with Christian principles. These coöperatives have consider-

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[28] Stewart, Maxwell S., "Coöperatives in the U. S.—A Balance Sheet." Published by the Public Affairs Committee, page 9. For discussion purposes see also, "What Should Farmers Aim to Accomplish Thru Organization?" and "Coöps: How Far Can They Go?" Both published by the AAA, U. S. D. A., 1937.

able legal and governmental sanction, though laws applying to coöperatives are still far from perfect.

If coöperation is to become one way of solving the economic problem in America—too much food while too many people are unemployed and in want—the church must attack the problem of consumer-producer coöperation. Over a notable range of commodities this problem has been solved in Sweden through action of joint boards which have regard for fairness of prices and quality of products from the standpoint of both producers and consumers.

Churches in small towns and villages are often faced with a different situation for local merchants and naturally resent the coming in of coöperatives, particularly of the consumer type.[29] Many farmers have come to realize, however, that their greatest savings can come through coöperatives for handling things they buy or sell in relatively large quantities, such as grain, livestock, milk and milk products, tractor fuel, feeds, seeds, fertilizer, and similar products. Recently, farmers have become interested in electric coöperatives for through them their power as well as light can become available at reasonable rates. Also, cold storage lockers, plants in which supplies of meat butchered at home, vegetables, and fruits may be kept, thus doing away with the old salt barrel and smoke house, are becoming popular. First attention is normally given these types of coöperation. In some communities other types may develop with a possible result that private handlers may find opportunities for greater service and a higher regular income with less risk

[29] Brunner and Lorge, *op. cit.*, page 61.

through managing good coöperatives than as owners of precarious business enterprises in the same field.[30]

The church in the rural community should, then, have first-hand knowledge of the farm organizations having an influence in that community. It should try to understand their program and contribute to the improvement of that program by endeavoring to overcome misunderstandings between farm groups, constructively criticizing programs so as to keep them as free of pettiness and partisanship as possible and help to develop the farm organization in the community so that its program is really effective in advancing both farmers' interests and rural-urban understanding.

Producer as well as consumer coöperatives should be a part of this program and their advancement made a part of a community plan for the advancement of agriculture. Churches that have recognized these forces and worked with them can scarcely be other than vital influences in their communities. One man in a community with the right coöperative spirit can do much to make it over from an arena of sheer economic endeavor to one in which social and spiritual values are apparent.[31]

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[30] Many managers of Coöperative cold storage locker systems were at one time in the butchering business; coöperative elevators drew many of their managers from the private grain trade.

[31] Kagawa, Toyahiko, "The Christian Internationale."

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In what ways do farmers in your community coöperate? List the various farmers' organizations and analyze their functions.
2. What are the primary motives for farm organizations functioning today? How do the various types coöperate or fail to coöperate?
3. Analyze the effectiveness with which farmers form economic coöperatives in the community. What are the basic principles guiding these coöperatives? To what extent can they be said to be democratic or fulfill the true definition of the word "coöperation"?
4. What are the trends in farmer organizations in the community—for the individual; with respect to the size of the local unit; as to the basic philosophies?
5. How can the church work out a plan to help make coöperation a true expression of "brotherhood"?

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CHAPTER V

GOVERNMENT AND THE FARMER

The First American Farmers in Government

Colonial subsidies came to farmers in the United States as early as 1622 when James I of England encouraged the breeding of silk worms; in 1656 every landowner in Virginia was ordered to plant 10 mulberry trees for every 100 acres he possessed,[1] one of the earliest recorded farm dictatorships in America.

Early forms of activity by individuals or governments included, among other things, experiments with new seeds on different kinds of soils. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were constantly experimenting with new methods of farming on their lands. Among the first efforts by governments was the passage of an act in Connecticut in 1735 to control barberry because they were thought to be the cause of black stem rust of wheat. Boards of agriculture soon came to be established in the various states to encourage, support, and carry on studies to improve crops and livestock.

Agricultural societies were formed and became prominent at an early date under the constitution. "In the 75 years before the Civil War of 1860, more agricultural progress was made than in all previous history. America acquired and conquered a continent equal to that of Europe, increasing its area 266 per cent. Its population multiplied nearly eight times, from 4,000,000 to 31,500,000.

[1] True, Alfred Charles, "A History of Agricultural Experimentation and Research in the United States." Misc. Pub. No. 251, U. S. D. A., July, 1937, page 1.

Trails, roads, turnpikes, steamboats, canals, railroads, and the telegraph were developed." [2] The numerous agricultural societies and farmers' clubs which developed had in them many public officials and public-minded men. They had some influence in getting legislation. The Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture, organized in 1792, secured a grant of a township of land from the legislature for a professorship in Natural History at Harvard and secured appropriations for a botanical garden there. The first New York Board of Agriculture was established in 1819. George Washington had recommended a national board in his last message, December 7, 1796. From this a bill was drafted for the creation of "The American Society of Agriculture" with a secretary paid by the government and headquarters at Washington. The bill also carried provision for a military academy; Jefferson opposed the measure because he feared it would be unconstitutional. Nothing more was done on Washington's recommendation at that time.[3]

A Committee on Agriculture was set up in the House in 1820 and one in the Senate in 1825, but they were reported to have accomplished little except impede progress. The first direct appropriation for agriculture was $1,000 for the Commissioner of Patents in 1839. From 1852 to 1861 the National Convention of Agricultural Societies and other organizations and individuals repeatedly recommended to Congress to establish a Department of Agriculture. Finally, after the Civil War had started,

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[2] Ball, Carleton R., "History of the United States Department of Agriculture and the Development of Its Objectives." Mimeo. lecture given in the Graduate School of the Department, October 16, 1936.

[3] True, *op. cit.*, page 18 ff.

thus removing the opposition of southern congressmen who had opposed extending the power of the Federal Government, and because schools and colleges (many set up by church bodies) overcame prejudices to "book larnin'," the department was created by an act approved by President Lincoln on May 15, 1862.

The year 1862 was historic, for two other agricultural acts were passed by the same Congress: the Morrill Act, creating the system of Land-Grant Colleges of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, approved July 2; and the National Homestead Act, approved April 10, under which any citizen over 21 years of age was entitled to a homestead of 160 acres of the public domain by complying with certain rules as to residence and improvements, and the payment of a small fee.

Influence of Farmers on Legislation Before 1920

The Granger Movement began about half a decade after the United States Department of Agriculture was established, and as the Land-Grant Colleges were being established and the Homestead Act was being put into force. Movements for agricultural legislation came from two principal sources in the last half of the nineteenth century—the promoters of work in Land-Grant Colleges, many of whom were characterized as "teachers of agriculture," and the various farm organizations. The first was a group interested in finding new facts concerning agricultural production—seeds, soil, feeds, control of insects and pests, new machines, etc. The second was made up of farmers' organizations and groups seeking legislation to provide better economic and social conditions for farmers.

The passage of the Hatch Act in 1887 was a result of numerous meetings of "friends of Agriculture," that is, presidents and professors of Land-Grant Colleges, conventions of delegates of state agricultural colleges, agricultural societies, and boards of agriculture, calls by commissioners of agriculture to conventions of agriculturists and resolutions presented to committees on agriculture in the House and Senate by these bodies. Out of these activities, the Association of Land-Grant Colleges was formed. In November, 1885, the National Grange took a hand by approving "the object and purpose of this bill." The Hatch Act in its final form granted money to the states for agricultural experiment stations.[4] Other Acts providing further funds for research include the Morrill Act of August 30, 1890, the Adams Act of 1906, the Purnell Act of 1925, and the Bankhead-Jones Act of 1936. All of the Acts until the Purnell Act, encouraged investigation in soils, plants and animal culture. The Purnell Act recognized the human elements in agriculture by making possible studies in (1) the marketing and distribution of farm products, (2) the problem of surpluses, (3) the vitamin content of foods, (4) rural social organization and agencies essential to a permanent and effective agriculture and (5) factors affecting the quality and palatability of meat.[5] From $1,000 in 1837 the appropriation had increased to $18,000,000 in 1914.[6]

Farm organizations, in their turn, sought regulative measures. Most of them maintain legislative representatives in Washington and some have their "agents" at

[4] True, *op. cit.*, page 4.

[5] *Ibid.*, page 277.

[6] *Ibid.*, page 215.

state legislative sessions. The Grange was active in making the head of the Department of Agriculture a member of the President's cabinet, which was accomplished in 1889. Later, the Grange and Alliance together urged that the secretary be a "dirt farmer." Many "Granger Laws" were enacted by states before 1900 to regulate railroad rates and, through Grange activity, the principle that a state may regulate rates was affirmed by the United States Supreme Court. The Grange, also, favored legislation encouraging coöperatives, stood for an income tax as early as 1880, supported silver purchasing legislation in 1878 and "free silver" in 1889.[7]

The Farmers' Alliance fell in with many Grange proposals in urging free coinage of silver, government ownership of railroads and telegraphs, prohibition of alien ownership of land, and of gambling in stocks, options and futures, and the adoption of election of national officials by direct vote of the people. Plans, such as the subtreasury plan, were proposed for raising farm prices through issue of certificates for stored farm supplies and the provision of cheap credit. The Farmers' Union favored a proportional representation in Congress based on occupational groups, liberal credit, and support of farmers' coöperatives.[8]

Under the Hatch Act, which required each station to publish bulletins, and in the absence of any organized method of extending the information to farmers, the various colleges of agriculture began to set up extension services of their own. Farmers' institutes grew out of

[7] Wiest, Edward, "Agricultural Organization in the United States." Page 417 ff.

[8] *Ibid.*, page 467 ff.

the more or less regular meetings of agricultural societies but their real impetus came from the Association of Land-Grant Colleges. They provided for the discussion of practical agricultural problems by specialists from the colleges.

Farmers' institutes flourished during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth.[9] The "institute" was thus "an outgrowth of and fostered by the early agricultural organizations of a conservative nature." [10] However, demands by farmers for more specific information gave rise to "schools" on dairying, soils, and horticulture, which were started, and meetings were held by specialists from colleges of agriculture in churches, school houses, town halls, homes, stores, theatres, and similar places to provide this sort of information. Prior to 1901 only one extension staff was organized, by Cornell in New York State; in 1901 Illinois organized a staff and by 1903 there were three others.

The misfortunes of the South really brought impetus to the movement; it was the start from which the educational forces of the Land-Grant Colleges, the United States Department of Agriculture, and a farmers' organization were linked together. Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, who had been a central figure in getting the Hatch Bill passed, who realized the danger the Mexican boll weevil was to the southern cotton crop, realized also that southern farmers had to "learn by doing" to be convinced that the insect could be controlled. Curiously, the farmer who agreed to aid in the first demonstration would not do it

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[9] Wiest, *op. cit.*, page 63.

[10] Kile, O. M., "The Farm Bureau Movement." Page 65. By permission of the Macmillan Company, publishers.

unless he was guaranteed protection against loss. Business men put up the money for that guarantee. Once confidence was instilled Dr. Knapp could hold demonstrations all over the South and Congress was willing to support his work. Thus, a demand grew up for the services of "county demonstrators" or county agents or farm advisers as they came later to be called, in several parts of the country who could reside in the county and act as the representative of the colleges in the county.[11]

Realizing the importance of the education of boys and girls in the "practical acts of agriculture" county agents were urged to develop "project work" by boys and girls on farms. They grew their own corn, fed a hog from "pighood to market," undertook sewing or canning projects, and other activities so that they could "learn by doing." Instruction was given in "clubs" where lessons in social coöperation could be learned. Today 1,200,000 rural boys and girls are enrolled in 4H Club work.

The factory system, which took away home industries, the lack of teaching to earn a living in schools, and the desire to reduce the number of untrained men in society led to agitation for vocational training in high schools. As early as 1878 the Grange encouraged the teaching of agriculture in elementary schools. Sentiment in support of such legislation grew with the development of numerous societies promoting industrial education. The law was passed in 1917; it provided agricultural, home economics, and industrial vocational training and is now administered by the Bureau of Education, Department of Interior.

[11] *Ibid.*, page 72 ff.

Two important developments came out of "county agent" work: (1) The farmers in many sections realized that the agents' services would be more effective through a farmers' organization, though the first efforts on the part of the agents, some with the help of business men's groups, were to enlist the farmers' support; (2) The colleges were convinced that a uniform system should be provided through the United States Department of Agriculture for "extending" results of experimentation and research to the farmer; this resulted in the passage of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914. Such a system was recommended by President Roosevelt's Country Life Commission in 1908, after studying agricultural conditions and seeing the beneficial results of Dr. Knapp's work and the work of the several colleges of agriculture which had extension staffs.[12] Although farm bureaus had begun to develop from 1910, the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 gave these organizations their first real stimulus; in Illinois the college established an unwritten policy that extension work would be made available to farmers only when they organized to receive it. Thus, extension agents from the college had a great deal to do with the organization of many farm bureaus and home bureaus in Illinois.

The Emergency Food Production Act, passed August 14, 1917, made large sums of money available for county agent work in order to encourage farmers to "grow wheat for the boys overseas." Thus, farm bureau and county agent work spread rapidly and in 1919 the American Farm Bureau Federation was organized. The slogan "food will win the war" gave impetus, also, to the or-

[12] Wiest, *op. cit.*, page 332.

ganization of home bureaus and home economics extension work throughout the nation.

Efforts Put Forth Before the Depression

The period of 1910 to 1914 is frequently referred to as the "Golden Age of Agriculture." Farm prices were on an equal footing with other prices and farmers everywhere were relatively prosperous; industry, too, felt the surge of farm prosperity and was likewise prosperous. Then came the World War with its high prices, stimulation of production, expanded acreages, and a war hysteria which brought dire consequences. The World War was the chief cause for the burdensome agricultural surplus and the continued demands of farmers for governmental assistance in the decade 1920 to 1929. The effects of America's protective policy toward industry and her free-trade policy for agriculture were not fully felt until the World War changed the United States from a debtor to a creditor nation.

Depression for farmers began in 1920, with some mild improvement during the middle of the decade; for industry it did not become acute until following 1929. The sixty million acres broken up to raise crops to "feed the boys overseas" was not put back into grass; the "boys" came home and went out to their new farms. Farmers who bought land at high "war" prices hoping to pay for it with "$2.50 wheat" were soon faced with $.50 wheat; the mortgages went unpaid, many farms "went back" and unrest among farmers grew even as early as 1921.

The organization of a "Farm Bloc" in Congress, as a result of the activity, principally, of the American Farm

Bureau Federation, made it easier to secure farm legislation. The Capper-Volstead Act authorizing associations of agricultural producers, the Packer and Stockyards Act, the Grain Futures Act, the Emergency Agricultural Credits Act, the Fordney-McCumber Tariff Act, and the Purnell Act were all passed during the years 1920 to 1928.[13] Several other bills were submitted for price raising, extension of credits, etc., but an "individualist" Republican Congress and President did not allow them to become law. Among them were the McNary-Haugen bill, which twice passed by the House and Senate and twice vetoed by President Coolidge, had been backed by the American Farm Bureau Federation and the American Cotton Growers' Exchange; the McKinley-Adkins bill backed by the National Grange and all similar bills "to establish farm prices." The McNary-Haugen bill would sell the surplus above domestic consumption in the world market at world prices and the losses would be recouped by a differential loan assessment on each pound or bushel when and as sold by the farmer. Fair prices—"cost of production plus a profit"—were to be based upon a "fair exchange value" bearing the same ratio to the current general price index for the same period.[14] This bill provided for raising the price of farm products by making tariff duties effective, but it did not provide for control of production.

The Federal Farm Board was created by an Act of Congress just as the country was being plunged into the depression. It was the administration's "substitute plan"

[13] Black, John D., "Agricultural Reform in the United States." Pages 69 to 73.

[14] *Ibid.*, page 232.

for the McNary-Haugen and other price-raising bills so passionately sought by farm organizations. It had good features—the encouragement of coöperative marketing—but its "revolving fund" to buy and withhold from the market any burdensome surplus which threatened to depress the price of the commodity "below the cost of production," failed to prevent near-disaster. Farmers didn't quit producing and the Board's surpluses grew to such proportions that their very existence depressed domestic prices below world prices irrespective of "cost of production."

The farmers of the nation went into the period of general depression, beginning 1930, with heavy mortgages, burdensome surpluses, a very weak export trade, and the lowest prices relative to other prices they had ever experienced.

The AAA and the Soil Conservation Acts

The nation has become "conservation" conscious by reason of dust storms, floods, and drouth pictured through newspapers, radio, and report-prolific "emergency" research bodies of the Federal Government. The "farm problem," likewise, has frequently made front-page news—the farmer has become articulate through general farm organizations, coöperatives, colleges of agriculture, the United States Department of Agriculture, and through "direct action" groups whose antics make good reading in newspapers and rate on radio news broadcasts. Nature herself has helped by casting a "dust" gloom over half the nation at times.

The Agricultural Adjustment Administration was born in the depression under an administration whose ear was

attuned to the demands of farm groups. The Act came from the joint action of the three national farm organizations and the National Coöperative Council—a group made up of representatives of coöperatives—with the help and counsel of specialists from colleges of agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture. The administrator of the Act—a young farm editor from Iowa—Henry A. Wallace—knew farm conditions from the ground up. He was a "corn farmer" himself.

The Act was designed to help solve the problem of price and surplus, encourage coöperative marketing, provide more adequate credit, and stimulate soil conservation. A "benefit payment" was made to farmers who would sign a contract to reduce the acreage of wheat, for example, twenty per cent. The money to finance the payments came out of processing taxes. The acreage taken out of production could not be used in any way to add to the surplus of crops included in the Act—wheat, corn, tobacco, cotton, and rice. Farmers were encouraged to plant the idle acres in soil building crops.

In January, 1936, the Supreme Court of the United States declared the levying of processing taxes unconstitutional; a new Act, the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, promptly took its place; it disposed of the contracts and substituted payments from the United States Treasury to farmers for agreeing to reduce "soil depleting crops."

Though the drouth, with the help of the AAA, brought farm prices back in 1936 and 1937, yet, the Act was felt to be temporary—a permanent Act was needed to protect the farmers of the nation against "ten cent corn and twenty-five cent wheat." Accordingly the

Agricultural Conservation Act of 1938 was passed; the 1939 Act, not essentially different from that of 1938, is now being administered.

Types of Present Legislation Affecting Farmers

"The new Farm Act" stands as the most important present-day legislation affecting farmers. Its declared purposes are: (1) to conserve the nation's soil resources and use them efficiently, (2) to assist in the marketing of farm products for domestic consumption and export, (3) to regulate interstate and foreign commerce in cotton, wheat, corn, tobacco, and rice so as to minimize violent fluctuations in supplies, marketings, and prices of farm commodities; protect consumers by maintaining adequate reserves of food and feed, and assure farmers of a fair share in the national income.[15]

The Act combines price stabilization with inducements to save soil. Farmers can coöperate or not as they wish. Farmers who coöperate must keep within certain acreage "allotments" computed on the basis of past acreages and yields; the coöperating farmers are eligible to loans on all their crops, non-coöperators to 60 per cent of the "surplus." Marketing and storage quotas for the five listed commodities can become effective only when supplies exceed normal by amounts definitely specified for each commodity, and then only when approved in referendum of producers requiring two-thirds majority for enforcement.

In 1938, unrest was evidenced among a small group in the Midwest relative to the Act of 1938. Its roots lie in the dissatisfaction among some farmers with their allot-

[15] "The New Farm Act." G-83, U. S. D. A., February, 1938.

ments. Agitators seized upon this unrest as evidence of farmers' unwillingness to submit to governmental dictation. Others pointed out that no compulsion is exercised under the Act except as voted by a two-thirds majority, and then only in case of an impending burdensome surplus. The marketing quotas thus provided for would be invoked, the legality of which were upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States in April, 1939. Time for provisions of the Act to operate has been too short to determine its full consequences. It is significant that the last Congress voted the huge sum of three-quarters of a billion dollars for this and other legislation designed to provide farm security, encourage farm ownership, stimulate agricultural education, extend credit, "compensate" farmers for soil-building practices, provide an adequate domestic food and fibre supply and an exportable surplus, remove unproductive land from tillage uses, and put a "bottom" under farm prices, while at the same time protecting consumers against scarcity.

Possible Future Courses

America may some day have a farm dictatorship but it seems unlikely that it will come unless it comes as a concomitant to industrial dictatorship. Farmers of America still love their independence, their freedom of action and their right to declare their own policies too much to vote themselves into any form of straitjacketing control for any period of time. Probably the farm organizations themselves are the greatest bulwark against dictatorship. The Farm Bureau, the Grange, and the Farmers' Union have all opposed any form of control except that voted by the farmers themselves.

Farmers, however, are looking to government now as never before to help develop a "united Agriculture." The AAA has gone far in this direction for it has "leaders" in every township or other rural minor civil division of the country, elected by farmers to help administer the Act. The Farm Security Administration has been set up to help farmers buy farms and stem the tide toward a "landless people on the land." Larger appropriations than ever have been made to colleges of agriculture for experimentation, research, and extension, particularly in the field of agricultural economics; more money has been made available, also, for vocational instruction. The Farm Credit Administration has aided in the organization of farm credit coöperatives. The Rural Electrification Administration has been very active in getting electricity to farmers, either by setting up coöperatives or, through them, getting private utility companies to reduce their rates so that farmers can afford electric power. Coöperatives in other fields have been encouraged.

"Let us alone and we'll work out our own salvation" is the repeated cry of individualists. But farmers can't be let alone; they are in government because they are a part of government. Since the American policy to protect industry (through high tariff) was inaugurated, groups of farmers have also sought protection against exploitation by other groups. Being on a world market (always having an exportable surplus which determined prices) the tariff on most farm products did little good. In general, protection has been sought in two ways: (1) to organize coöperatives for securing more favorable prices and better service and (2) to seek favorable legislation. Only recently a new policy has been incorporated—gov-

ernment aid to regulate production for maintenance of fair prices and for conservation of natural resources.

Doubtless these three types of activity will continue. Farmers will continue to organize coöperatives; they will seek legislation for protection against exploitation by other groups, and they will doubtless ask government aid in helping control production.

The farmer lives in a world community. If as many people continue to live on the land as now live there and if technology in agriculture continues to improve, new markets will have to be found in order to maintain "fair prices" or a large number of farmers must produce primarily for home use.

Production of usable goods is wealth. The farmers produce the essentials for life—food and fibre. A program to control production in agriculture does limit that necessary wealth. Many people are still underfed and poorly clothed. The "scarcity" economy practiced by industry and labor, restricting distribution and keeping purchasing power from the masses in order to be insured of profits is at the root of the difficulty in the national economy. The great task ahead for statesmen and leaders in America is to readjust this order so that the interests of the whole of society are the first consideration. Harold Moulton in his book on "Income and Economic Progress" [16] has pointed the way; Henry Wallace in his "The General Welfare" [17] urges the change through "coördinated effort among organized business, labor, agriculture, and government to see that security is assured, on a sound basis, to the underprivileged." Give the masses purchasing

[16] Moulton, Harold G., "Income and Economic Progress." 1935.
[17] Wallace, Henry A., "The General Welfare." 1937.

power, leisure to enjoy life, education in how to live as well as how to earn a living and all other classes will prosper as well.

The Interest of the Church in Farm Legislation

"Unto the least of these"—seems to epitomize what Secretary Wallace is striking at in his "The General Welfare." If farm legislation has been sought to attain "fair prices" and equal opportunity for rural people, and if rural people are employed in producing the basic necessities, then the one institution upholding fairness and righteousness should be interested in that legislation. This is a challenge to the city church as much as it is to the country church. A blind and self-satisfied city group, fattening off the best from the country, in human as well as material resources, can cause untold injury by seeking selfish ends. The urban church, at least, should seek the facts and should point out the inevitable—a rural slum will cause a growing city blight; conversely a prosperous agriculture begets a truly prosperous city life—the one cannot go on without the other for very long.

In America church and state are separate. The task of developing a more stable rural civilization belongs to both; both must work at it. Secretary Wallace says, "the problem of statesmanship is to mould a policy leading toward a higher state for humanity. . . . True statesmanship and true religion therefore have much in common." [18] The church can work with the state in changing the hearts of men so that our potential abundance can be created and find its way to the millions now in need,

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[18] Wallace, Henry A., "Statesmanship and Religion." Round Table Press, 1934, page 115. Used by permission.

without depriving any of adequate means for an ample living standard and a satisfying type of life.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are the more significant forms of legislation affecting farmers of your community? What response do farmers make to them?
2. How far should the government go in extending services to farmers? What types of services should be improved—what types discontinued? How should the remaining services be supported? Why?
3. How effective are governmental efforts to aid farmers? What are the reasons for this? What can be done to make them more effective?
4. How does the farmer in the community exercise a voice in determining what governmental services he shall have? What should be the situation?
5. How can the church help make governmental services more effective?

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CHAPTER VI

THE FARMER AND HIS COMMUNITY

The Importance of Economic Security

Farmers in some farming type areas of the Midwest spend 90 per cent or more of their time within their line fences.[1] Much of this time is spent at work—earning a living. In pioneer days the farmer depended almost entirely on his own efforts on the farm for his living. He raised his own food, butchered his own meat, churned his own butter, and even made his own clothing from the wool of the sheep on his farm.

Today the situation is almost reversed. The farmer sells wheat, corn, hogs, cattle, fruit, and dairy products. He buys his flour or bread, considerable canned goods, his clothing, and depends for transportation not on his horses or other animals which he feeds from home-grown feed, but he has a car, a truck, and a tractor for which he must buy gasoline.

The modern farmer is probably affected as much by what happens outside his line fences as by what he does on his own farm. An increasing amount of knowledge of new and improved practices comes from the outside and he must keep posted and use the best practices possible if he is to succeed.[2] Over price changes, the farmer, as an individual, has little control, though he may adjust

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[1] Lindstrom, D. E., "Forces Affecting Participation of Farm People in Rural Organization." Bull. 423, Uni. of Ill. Agr. Exp. Sta.

[2] Case, H. C. M., and Mosher, M. L., "Farm Practices and Their Effects on Farm Earnings." Uni. of Ill. Col. of Agr. and Agr. Exp. Sta. Bull. 444, 1938.

to them if he studies their trend. Many farmers now look to Outlook Reports from the United States Department of Agriculture and agricultural colleges to help them make wise adjustments. A drop in prices may mean a decrease in exchange value of products to as little as one-fourth the original value in a single season, as when corn prices dropped from $1.25 per bushel to $.35 per bushel in the one year, 1937. Is it any wonder that farmers have made the fight they have for stabilized prices?

Since the farmer is so dependent for his security upon forces outside his farm fences it behooves him to realize that coöperation with neighbors and other farmers in the community and coöperation between community groups is essential. The place to begin coöperative activity is ordinarily in the community, though many coöperatives function on a regional basis, depending on a few forward-looking farmers in each individual community. If farmers were assured a relatively stabilized income, or at least were free from wildly fluctuating prices, they could more easily make plans for soil conservation, farm management to assure conservation, home improvements, and be in better position to take part in governmental, educational, social, and religious affairs. A farm population driven by chance, both on the part of nature and on the part of man-made economic order, cannot easily become a stable population. Economic insecurity is a major cause for social unrest.

Forces Affecting Rural Community Organization

The rural community of today, unlike that of 50 or 100 years ago, is a diffused complexity. The school provides about the only common interest for the people of

most rural communities with towns in which 500 or more people live. The church life is diffused among denominations, the social life among social clubs and lodges, the political life among political groups in which only a few take much active part, and trade no longer offers opportunity to get on common ground, for it has become more or less divided between the nearby town and city. Even the schools have a divisive influence on rural life since part of the country children go to a one-room school and part to the town, community, or township high school.

Farm tenancy, especially that which induces tenants to move frequently, tends to break down community life. For example, in one situation all the school directors and all but one of the deacons of the church moved out of the community in a single year.[3] On the other hand, in several areas in the Midwest tenants have been on the same farm 25 or more years and prefer tenancy to ownership. Localities in which tenure is stable have a far better chance to build good schools, good churches, and a group solidarity among the people of the community.

Modern forms of communication, also, influence local organization; the automobile and the all-weather road make it possible to establish contacts in an area many times larger than was possible before the advent of the modern modes. Livestock and other farm products may be trucked 200 miles or more to central markets and the bulk of a farmer's trading can be done in the near metropolis while the family is attending a movie.

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[3] Fielder, V. B., and Lindstrom, D. E., "Land Use and Family Welfare." Uni. of Ill. Agr. Exp. Sta., 1939.

Special interests have developed to divide the people of the community. The farmers form their local farm organization, unit, or club, the business men join local or nearby city service or luncheon clubs and even high schools group the pupils into interest groups formed around athletics, drama, music, and numerous other extra-curricular activities. This trend makes it more difficult for the churches in the community, which in turn have developed "in-groups" among the members of those loyal to their programs.

Yet studies have shown a surprisingly large number in many communities who belong to no organization; these "non-joiners" seek their own group life among kinfolk, in public gatherings, and in informal activities, many of them frequenting commercial amusements, dance halls, movies, and pool halls. Special interest groups fail to touch these, many of whom are young people.

Hence, rural community life in America has tended to become individualistic—a small group of the same individuals takes the leadership in many activities; too large a number just "leave it to them" and seek their own pleasures.

Trends in Organization in the Rural Communities

Probably the most significant trend in rural organization in the last 50 years has been the moving of group life out of the church activities in the community—a sort of secularization. At one time, much of the social life of the community revolved about the church. This was especially true if there was only one church in the community. Then special interest groups [4] began to develop

[4] Kolb, J. H., and Wileden, A. F., "Special Interest Groups in Rural Society." Res. Bull. 84 of the Col. of Agr., Uni. of Wis.

and neighborhood groups began to wane. For a time, fraternal and patriotic organizations flourished; but now they also are waning. Farmers' clubs in the local schools gave way to parent-teacher associations and school clubs. Some of the women once making up church societies became members of women's and bridge clubs. Men's brotherhoods or Bible classes in the church lost members as luncheon and country clubs developed. Boy Scouts, girl scouts, and high school clubs made serious inroads on youth societies in churches.

A second significant trend has been toward county-wide groups which have "selected" people from among those in the local community. Brunner and Kolb [5] found many of them with paid workers. Some were federations of locals; many, such as county health units, were single county organizations. Rural youth organizations in Illinois are of this type, most being organized on a county basis. Today the county can be regarded as the administrative unit for many functions; the community is the working unit.

Considerable thought and discussion has been given systems of coördination of the varied and numerous groups in the community with some efforts toward experimentation with councils or, in rural territories, community organizations. The system worked out early for Missouri [6] and that by Rapking in West Virginia [7] are examples of some.

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[5] Brunner, Edmund deS., and Kolb, J. H., "Rural Social Trends." Page 265.

[6] Hummel, B. L., "Community Organization in Missouri." Ext. Cir. 209 of the Col. of Agr., Uni. of Mo., 1928.

[7] Rapking, A. H., "Education Thru Organized Community Activities." Cir. 307, W. Va. Col. of Agr. Ext. Ser. in Agr. and H. E., 1934.

The efforts in Iowa [8] and those in Illinois [9] appealing to the agricultural group have a slightly different application. These plans work for a people whose chief interest is agriculture. The problem of coördinating the work in rural-urban communities in which the town is relatively small is a more difficult problem. Probably the approach must be made on the basis of function as in a few Illinois communities.[10] Some efforts have been made through an all-inclusive council.

The Place of Planning in Rural Community Life

Can a people so divided in interests as they seem to be in the average American "rural" community plan in the hope of improving community life? Many authors think so and some efforts have been made—some have been primarily economic in nature as with the zoning activities in northern Wisconsin,[11] others have been socio-economic and affect the entire life of the community as in the settlement projects of the Federal Government,[12] and others have been on social or educational lines. In many states and counties [13] public planning boards have been set up.

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[8] Stacy, W. H., "Tomorrow's Community." Ext. Cir. 251, Iowa State Col. Ext. Ser., Ames, 1938.

[9] Lindstrom, D. E., "The Rural Community Unit." RSE-10, Uni. of Ill. Col. of Agr. Ext. Ser. in Agriculture and Home Economics.

[10] Lindstrom, D. E., *et al.*, "Minutes of a Seminar on Community Relations." Published by the Uni. of Ill. Col. of Agr. Ext. Ser. in Agriculture and Home Economics.

[11] Wehrwein, G. H., "Zoning Northern Wisconsin Land." A series of reports published by the Col. of Agr., Uni. of Wis.

[12] Hill, George W., *et al.*, "Man-Land Adjustment." Res. Bull. 134, Agr. Exp. Sta., Uni. of Wis.

[13] Lohmann, Karl B., "A Community Planning Primer for Illinois." Bur. of Com. Plan. Pub., Col. of Fine Arts, Uni. of Ill., 1935.

North Carolina replanned Social Welfare so that every county has a board of charities and public welfare. Many California cities have coördinating councils on juvenile delinquency. Numerous community and county public health units are being organized. Efforts are being made in many states to unify the schools, simplify their administration and provide more equalized opportunities as between rural and urban children. A great deal is being done to plan for extending library service to rural areas. Many village communities now have definitely planned recreation programs. Rural governments are being replanned for efficiency, honesty, and trained service.[14] Public utilities, especially electric power, are reaching hitherto isolated areas as a result of the making of plans. Even churches of various denominations are now beginning to plan together to make religious service available to all the people of the community.[15]

Moreover, farm people are encouraged to make farm and home plans for over a period, and farmers are being brought together by farm and home advisers and local leaders in the Extension Service in community and county groups to plan programs to meet problems faced by farmers in their individual and group life. They study market trends, trends in yields, health conditions and plan programs to help people adjust to these trends or change their conditions.

People in rural areas can get together to plan for improving their situation. Today they can call upon people

[14] Cole, W. E., and Crowe, H. P., "Recent Trends in Rural Planning." Chapters VII to XVI.

[15] *Ibid.*, page 474 ff., and Dawber, Mark A., "Rebuilding Rural America." Pages 90 to 92.

trained in numerous fields as in health, soil management, or rural organization to aid them in their planning. Many farmers are now on volunteer planning committees. They need the help of their pastors, teachers, and other people in this task.

Though extension in rural society is relatively new, certain principles and procedures have been worked out for guiding community organization in rural areas. Carl C. Taylor [16] enunciates six principles—(1) build on the basis of agencies already there, (2) widen their scope, (3) bring leaders of these groups together to avoid duplication and encourage new activities, (4) teach every agency working with groups larger than the family the efficacy of group or community action, (5) establish a local community center for all efforts, and (6) encourage participation in community action on the part of every one in the community. Kolb and Brunner [17] set forth three principles— (1) determine local unit requirements and maintain an open channel to specialized services, (2) develop local responsibility with some financial support and secure additional support from a wider base of equalization, and (3) develop local solidarity and group identity and integrity with effective working relationships and coöperation or comity with larger (county, state, or national) groups. The procedure with the occupational group (farm people) in Illinois has been to (1) analyze problems, group activities, and list available leadership;

[16] Taylor, Carl C., "Rural Sociology." Page 567 ff.

[17] Kolb, J. H., and Brunner, Edmund deS., "A Study of Rural Society." Pages 595 to 599. See also Sanderson and Polson, "Rural Community Organization." Chapter VIII.

(2) experiment with programs and meetings to test interest, and (3) develop the details of local organizations.[18]

The Part the Church Can Play

In "Christianizing Your Community" [19] the International Council of Religious Education lists some of the influences the church should exert. According to this pamphlet church influences make (1) for positive Christian living on the part of the individual—an honest effort to be Christlike in business relations—being neighborly and developing a Christian philosophy; (2) for health and social well-being—an equal chance for all to have adequate medical care—right legislation and right observance of it—the control and elimination of contagious disease; (3) for reaching beyond the church membership — coöperation with other churches — coöperation with other organizations—concern for those "who don't go anywhere"; (4) for family life—recognize it as the primary unit of society—help families develop wholesome, balanced, and adequate home life; (5) for economic problems—provide for discussion of all sides of a question—understand the relation of a shifting farm tenancy to living conditions, to education and cultural opportunities—build a stable church and community life.

In discussing the part the church can play, Rev. Edgar Schmiedeler, Director of the Family Life Section of the National Catholic Welfare Conference calls attention to fundamental values in rural life that urban life does not

[18] Lindstrom, D. E., "The Rural Community Unit."

[19] *Christianizing Your Community.* Published by the International Council of Religious Education.

have or does not possess in equal measure. Among them is the "God-made" nature of rural life as against the artificial in city life, the advantages to family life in rural areas, the fact that the farmer class is the outstanding proprietorial class and that rural life produces individuals of moderation, genuineness and self-reliance. A stronger rural life should be a major concern of the church by "(1) keeping on the land a fair proportion of the . . . young folks who are now in the country, and (2) making converts in rural territory. . . . Whatever the approach, the matter of a better rural life must not be lost sight of. Indeed, it must be kept very definitely to the fore.[20]

Two significant national activities mark the efforts of the Catholic church to improve rural life. One is the National Catholic Rural Life Conference "to promote the spiritual, social, and economic welfare of the rural population." [21] It was organized in the fall of 1923; it is an organization of leaders interested in rural life. The other is the Rural Life Bureau, a subdivision of the Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference; it was to concern itself "with the interests and needs of Catholic Rural People." [22]

A Catholic priest, Father Nell, Effingham, Ill., who has served most of his life in an open country parish, has a plan of relationships which makes clear just how a church should relate itself to the vocational group of a commu-

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[20] Schmiedeler, Edgar, "A Better Rural Life." Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., 1938, pages iii and iv.

[21] *Ibid.*, pages 152 and 153.

[22] *Ibid.*, page 166.

nity.[23] He places the church and its program by the side of programs in the community carried through farm leaders in which direct contacts are made with the county farm and home adviser, the county unit of the general farmers' organization, the coöperatives organized in the area and on a commodity basis, the county Agricultural Conservation Association, and similar service agencies. Through these county groups, service can be secured from the college of agriculture, the state farmers' organization and other state service agencies, public and voluntary. These in turn provide contacts with regional and national bodies such as the United States Department of Agriculture and the national farmers' organizations.

Youth doubtless forms the most "reachable" group in the community, yet until recently nothing much was done for youth, especially those out of school, not married and not yet farming or in business for themselves. A publication on recent "findings" of the International Council of Religious Education stresses the importance that various groups working with youth know each other's programs, integrate and correlate these programs and work out "inter-agency" projects and programs.[24] The National Youth Commission recommends the approach to these ends be made through youth. "The school, church, home, and all community agencies must perceive the organic nature of social life." "The local community must attack the problem of developing a harmonious

[23] Nell, George M., "Rural and Urban Relations Based on the "Quadragesimo Anno Encyclical of Pope Pius XI." Co-op Parish Activities Service, Effingham, 1938. See diagram and explanations, Effingham, Illinois.

[24] Hargreaves, J. Robert, "Report of the Findings Committee." International Council of Religious Education, Chicago.

program which will have the support of all elements." [25] These chapter headings challenge all communities but they can be most quickly applied to rural areas; and since rural areas send many of their youth to cities, city groups can well take an interest.[26] The church, city and country, might lead out in a new movement for community planning for human welfare. It can do so if it can forget its minor differences in this major common task.

The Committee on Town and Country of the Home Missions Council of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America has set forth in preliminary fashion a guide to the rural church to develop closer coöperation with all groups working to advance rural life in the rural community: "Rural ministers should have close contact with (agencies for medical care) and study group hospitalization, coöperative medical care and other preventive programs for rural areas; (they should have) close contact and real friendship with the teachers of schools of their parishes; (they should) work with . . . character building agencies; (they should) stress the need of the rural church to coöperate with the extension service . . . (and) with other farm organizations . . . and rural coöperatives." [27] The report emphasizes, among other things, that the rural churches must have a larger part in the growing movement for democratic and systematic public

[25] Rainey, Homer P., "How Fare American Youth?" Page 170 ff.

[26] A significant experiment for the training of youth for religious service in rural areas is being carried on at Merom, Indiana. See Greene, Shirley, "Merom Institute." Argus Printing Co., Cynthiana, Ind., 1939.

[27] "A National Program for the Rural Church." Published by the Home Missions Council, pages 11 and 12.

discussion of the issues of the day, sensing a closer relation between agricultural and rural life and democracy.

The work of the church can permeate the many forms of social development in every community. The rural pastor can be aware of programs of other organizations, should be able to discuss them intelligently, should take time to develop friendships and coöperative plans with leaders of other churches and with leaders of rural organizations; he can know enough about rural problems so that he can advise at least as to the ethics if not the wisdom of some of the plans. The field is wide open and it calls for the best there is in the ministry and in the church.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Can the people of your community plan together in the hope of improving the life of the community? Why or why not? How?
2. What are the basic principles underlying community planning? How do they apply in your community?
3. What major functions of community life should enter into community planning? Where do the various groups of the community fit into such functions? How should responsibility for various functions be divided among them? How can this be done and yet maintain a unity in the community plan?
4. Should there be a plan for agricultural improvement in the community? If so, of what should it consist? How can governmental and other agencies be of value in such a plan? What part should voluntary action play? Legislative action?
5. Can a plan be made for inclusion of the churches? Of what nature can the contribution of the churches be? How would a group of churches get started in developing their part of the plan?

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CHAPTER VII

THE IMPACT OF RURAL ON URBAN LIFE

The Influence of Differential Increase in Population

The farm population of the nation supplies the non-farm population "with much more than food and fibre," declares O. E. Baker. "During the decade 1920 to 1929 about forty per cent of the youth who started to work in the factories, offices and stores of the cities came from the farms—for probably two decades on the average, they had been fed, clothed, and educated by the farming people, and were then provided, practically free of cost to the cities, ready for life's work." [1]

City people, by failing to produce enough children to maintain the population, must depend on rural areas to replenish it. Were there no migration from the rural areas the cities would lose in population and the number in the older age groups would increase more rapidly relative to the number in the younger age groups. "The nation as a whole has an interest in the rural population for in all likelihood, most of the citizens a century hence will be descendants of the rural people of today." [2]

The Influence on Education

Quality and youth both are demanded by the city when people find positions in cities. Youth, compared with older people, move in greatest numbers by a natural

[1] Folsom, J. C., and Baker, O. E., "A Graphic Summary of Farm Labor and Population." Misc. Pub. No. 265, U. S. D. A., 1936.

[2] *Ibid.*, page 17.

course of events. The city wants the best equipped in order to avoid having a greater burden of the unskilled than it now has. The educational opportunities, however, are poorest in the areas from which the greatest number of migrants come to increase the population of the city. The rural areas of the southeastern states—the areas from which these large surpluses come—had the lowest current expenditures per pupil in average daily attendance; here teachers' salaries were lowest; the school terms were shortest; and the training the children received could be only the most elementary.[3]

The burden of support for this inadequate school training for rural areas is greater, nevertheless, than for the urban areas. "In substantially every state, the adult group in the rural population is carrying an educational load, in terms of number of children to be educated, that is far in excess of the load carried by the adult group in the urban areas." [4] The possible outcome of such disparities is admirably stated in the report just quoted: "Education can be made a force to equalize the condition of men. It is no less true that it may be a force to create class, race, and sectional distinctions. The evidence indicates clearly that the schools of the United States, which have hitherto been regarded as the bulwark of democracy, may in fact become an instrument for creating those very inequalities they were designed to prevent. If, for a long period of years, each succeeding generation is drawn in disproportionately large numbers from those areas in

[3] Reeves, Floyd W., *et al.*, "Report of the Committee." A report of President Roosevelt's Advisory Committee on Education, Gov. Ptg. Office, 1938, page 21.

[4] *Ibid.*, pages 24 and 25.

which the economic conditions are poorest, if the population reserves of the nation continue to be recruited from economically underprivileged groups, and if the inability of the depressed economic areas and groups to provide proper education for their children is not corrected by aid from areas and groups more prosperous, the effect on American civilization and on representative political institutions may be disastrous." [5]

Influence on the Church

The difference in increase in population has its effect on every American institution, not the least of which is the church. "An examination of parish communicant lists discloses the fact that the city churches not only get most of their ministers from the country, but the bulk of their membership is recruited from transfers from rural America," states an article in the April, 1938, issue of the *Agricultural Mission Notes*.[6]

The church should be interested vitally, therefore, in equalizing opportunities for religious worship. A rural minister, for example, should be trained for work in the rural areas and should not have to be concerned about his economic support; his whole time and energy should be available to minister to the spiritual and other needs of his people. The task in the rural area is as important and as worthy of adequate support as that in the city. The whole church — all denominations coöperating— might well give attention to the problem of how to free

[5] *Ibid.*, pages 33 and 34.

[6] Reisner, John H., editor, "The Significance of Rural Religion to the City Church." Published by the Agricultural Missions Foundation, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

the rural minister from the necessity to "raise funds" for his own support. The cause of religion will be advanced significantly by such a program, for then ministers can be trained for service—not for jobs—with special training for service in rural areas.

The Material Elements in Rural Life in Relation to National Welfare

Agricultural America has passed out of the "hoe" and "horse" stage into the "machine" age. "The efficiency of the average farm worker has increased about as rapidly as that of the average city worker. But the number of factory workers has increased four times, while the number of farm workers increased only about sixty per cent. These extraordinary increases in the number of people in different city occupations would not have been possible if the farmers had not continued to increase their efficiency and at the same time maintain their birthrates at a higher rate than the rest of the population, so that farm-reared boys and girls were constantly feeding into the cities." [7] Probably the efficiency of the farmer will continue to increase. The best farmer will use the new methods first and the poorest will struggle along as best he can until he is starved out, forced to go to town to work at odd-jobs, or go on relief. Continued increase in efficiency on farms and continued decreases in birthrates, both in town and on the farm, will call for continued adjustments requiring the best thought in town and country alike if the levels of living of all the people are to be raised.

Real wealth lies in production. The more goods we have to use the better off we are, if goods are used for

[7] Wallace, Henry A., "The General Welfare." Page 5.

constructive purposes; and increased use of goods contributes to higher living standards. The city wants ample food and fibre to feed and clothe its people. It wants lumber and steel to build more and better houses; and farms, forests, and mines are the "raw material" sources of these things. Yet almost one-third of the rural population are said to be living under "slum" conditions, while millions in the cities are striving for jobs.[8]

America is rich in resources, both human and natural, but both have suffered under an "unplanned" economic system. Under corporate organization and administrative adjustment of prices and wages in industry, driven by the profit motive, America has been caught in the vise of a scarcity economy. The two income groups—the 5,169,000 farm families and the 14,399,000 urban families with incomes under $2,500.00—make up ninety per cent of our people.[9] To supply their unsatisfied wants would furnish a quantity of employment and a volume of business activities fully adequate to maintain prosperity and achieve economic progress for all classes, and especially the masses of unemployed in the population.

The problem is an exceedingly complex one, however. "The real income and accordingly the prosperity of the

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[8] Taylor, Carl C., "Disadvantaged Classes in American Agriculture," *op. cit.*, page 6. See also Thomas Alfred Tripp, "Rural People and the Church." Published by the Council for Social Action of the Congregational and Christian Churches, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York City, May, 1939.

[9] Moulton, Harold G., "Income and Economic Progress." See also Stewart, Maxwell S., "Income and Economic Progress." Published by the Public Affairs Committee, Inc., New York. Revised, 1938, page 9.

farm family today is inescapably dependent upon volume and character of our foreign trade, upon industrial payrolls and urban employment, upon the amount of monopoly price that is involved in the things they buy, the margin which exists between the price at which they sell their produce and the retail price which the consumer pays, the cost of the services—roads and schools—they obtain from their government, the inflexibility of transportation costs, the liquidation caused by a drastically declining price level, interest rates determined by federal banking policy, and mortgage indebtedness associated with the capitalization of lands for commercial production. Each of these in a measure introduces added elements of uncertainty and risk over which the farm family as an individual producing unit has very limited control." [10] The factors affecting the income and prosperity of the average city family are no less complicated and uncertain.

Profit sharing and coöperative organization have made advances in America—the one in the urban and the other in the rural areas—looking in the direction of solving the paradox of starving in the face of plenty. If wisely developed these two types of economic democracy may mean much to the solution of the problem in the future—but they are not the only means. If churches feel that "give us this day our daily bread" means anything, they must give increased attention to helping solve the economic paradox. Some business men and some farmers have insisted that morality has no place in business—if allowed to come in it will wreck business. Those churches which

[10] Schultz, T. W., "Understanding the Economics of Agriculture." Published in the Church and the Agricultural Situation, by the Home Missions Council, page 21.

stand forth for justice and fair play, should aim for "an adequate standard of living for all the people" and stand ready to promote that aim with every "available law, constitutional provision, administrative technique and tested model for business." [11]

The Preservation of the Family and Its Ideals

Traditionally the large family was an economic asset for the farmer because it provided a large labor supply; it was an economic liability in the city because of the heavy cost for rearing and educating children. With the machine age coming into agriculture the large family is becoming an economic liability for the country as well. Something must be substituted for the economic motive if the family as an institution is to be preserved, in rural as in urban life.

Fortunately farming is still a family business; it requires the coöperation of all the members of the family to be economically successful. Commercial or large-scale farming has been found to deter family life and morale in cases in which the fathers and mothers were tools of a commercial enterprise. Children of such families invariably seek other fields. However, farms owned by corporations sometimes provide as good working and living conditions as owner operated farms. The ideal for America, however, is the farm owned by the family living upon it.

Family life on the farm is more than making a living. Lessons in thrift, coöperation, frugality, love of family, and other admirable virtues can be taught to good advantage on a good farm owned and operated by the family as a unit. Young people growing up under such

[11] Chase, Stuart, "Government in Business." 1935, page 281.

circumstances want to stay on the farm. They see possibilities in it; they develop a love for it as a way of life.[12]

Youth trained on good farms in modern rural communities with properly trained leaders make the best kind of citizens for the city. They know how to work, for honest labor is part and parcel of farm life. They believe in happy family life for they have experienced it on the farm. They are alert, responsive, and dependable because early in life on the farm they must begin to rely on themselves and make their own judgments. They are industrious for they must be to match nature successfully on a farm. Hence from rural America can come the preservation of the basic social institution—the family. The nation needs good family life for the family has in it the roots of a true democracy and a brotherhood of love. Interests of urban and rural peoples are thus bound together —city people must be urged to want to see a healthy family life preserved on American farms.

The Importance of Equalized Opportunity

Since so much of the wealth and culture of the city has its source in the country, it would be "killing the goose that lays the golden egg" to refuse every means of equalizing opportunities between country and city.

The city can ignore the welfare of the rural people only at an ultimate sacrifice to itself. Today cities have better schools, better churches, better roads, better homes, better health facilities—they take for granted many conveniences the country folks just "do without." Much of

[12] Lindstrom, D. E., and Dawson, W. M., "The Effect of 4H Club Work on Capability and on Personal Quality." Bull. 451, Uni. of Ill. Agr. Exp. Sta., 1938.

the wealth possessed by residents of cities was created in the country—the city has not adequately shared that wealth with the country. Incomes are unbalanced, for farmers, making up one-fourth of the population, get only one-tenth of the national income. Possibly this is to be expected and cannot be helped under our present laws for "persons taking up occupations which are growing rapidly receive property by inheritance from parents in occupations growing less rapidly or declining." [13] In any event, inheritances, rents, taxes, and unfavorable price ratios have caused greater amounts of wealth to leave agriculture than has been the case for any other occupation.[14] Consequently, the support of institutions, when borne largely by the agricultural group, is unbalanced—farmers bear the heaviest proportional burden of taxation, for example. To make incomes more equitable would increase purchasing power for all classes appreciably, for farmers are good spenders. To support social and public institutions on a more equitable basis would make for a more virile, alert, and progressive life for those institutions both in the country and the city.

The church, both city and country, should live for these ideals. To do anything else is denying the charge given by the "Great Teacher" upon whose work and life was founded the Christian religion.

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[13] Stewart, Charles L., "Migration to and from Our Farms." The Annals of the Am. Acad. of Pol. and Soc. Sci., Vol. 113, No. 168, January, 1925, page 8 of reprint.

[14] Baker, O. E., "The New Significance of the Rural People to America and the Christian Church." Mimeo. Pub., Ext. Ser., New Brunswick, N. J., 1938, page 3.

Rural Youth and the Church

"The young people of the country are no longer going to church" is a comment heard time and time again, and one in which there is considerable truth so far as many country and rural churches are concerned. Probably if all the young people who ought to go to church and take part in church activities were doing so, we would have no empty churches in our rural communities.

One need not look far to discover some of the reasons for non-attendance on the part of young people at church. One reason, of course, is the high rate of tenancy which calls for the movement of farm families from farm to farm or community to community, on the average of at least once every five years for many rural communities. When a young person is uprooted from his home or community surroundings that often, he begins to lose the desire for attending some of the voluntary functions in community life. Moreover, when he moves from one community to the other he may have to sever his denominational church affiliations altogether, for in the new community there may not be a church of the same denomination. This is one of the basic reasons for the proverbial non-resident lists.

These situations present two very significant problems. The first is the matter of stabilizing our farming population on the land, that is, making it possible for a farmer to stay on one farm long enough to become established in the life of the community in which he is rearing his children. This is as much a social problem as it is an economic problem. As long as our commercial farm managers and profit-minded landlords insist on running their farms for profit alone, and as long as there is a trend to-

ward non-resident ownership of farms, we will be faced with this difficult problem. Ideas, systems, and laws relative to land use need changing and are changing; more and more farmers are coming to look upon the land as a trust and a place of security as much as a means of security.

Another important problem raised frequently by youth is with respect to the maintenance of denominationalism. Many rural youth are confused as to real differences in church denominations. They do not find it hard to distinguish between Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish usages. Within each of these branches, however, there are divisions the basis of which often baffles the understanding of young people. Frequently they see only that people otherwise congenial come to a parting of the ways because one, perhaps, is a Baptist and the other a Methodist. Many youth, therefore, prefer to remain aloof rather than allow such differences to break up childhood friendships. This situation is particularly acute in rural areas, especially in areas in which each church and denomination is struggling for existence and in doing so may exhibit anything but a Christian attitude toward other denominations.

People in America believe in religious freedom. It is one of the cornerstones upon which our democracy has been built. The churches have been no small factor in the development of that system; leaders coming out of the churches have wielded untold influence in the moulding of our country's laws. Youth today frequently get the impression, however, that the church no longer holds the place it once held; rural youth experience the result of city-minded training of men sent to their churches—men of the finest of characters and the best intentions but

who have little knowledge of rural problems and often no desire to stay in rural areas. They, the youth, desert the church knowing little of its peculiar problems and turn to more congenial and sympathetic leaders in the community.

Modern farmers expect to employ as highly modernized farming methods as possible, and hence much attention and energy has gone toward modernization of methods for making a living, with the result that the methods employed in learning how to live have lagged. This is reflected in church leadership, to some extent, especially in the inadequate training of both professional and lay leaders in many rural churches. The minister in the rural church was at one time the one person in the community to whom people turned for an ethical interpretation of life, the person to whom they turned for guidance in how they should conduct themselves in the presence of their fellow men. Many new problems and solutions to these problems concerning agriculture have come to change this situation entirely. Many of our rural ministers are being trained in seminaries from the standpoint of preaching and living in cities and receive very little, if any, training in rural life and the problems of agriculture. Farm people, therefore, no longer turn to them for guidance in ethical problems of the everyday life on the farm. Often in these days there seems to be no one to interpret whether a particular business practice is right or wrong, except the individuals concerned who go at it from the standpoint of using every legal means at hand to get the best of the other fellow. Some few farmers today fail to see anything wrong in taking advantage of farm organizations and coöperative organizations of all kinds wherever they

can without contributing in any way to the building up of those farm or coöperative organizations. One well-to-do farmer in a good agricultural community boasted that he has made considerable money as a result of his ability to take advantage of these services without having to contribute a single cent to their support.

When young people of our rural communities realize that the minister no longer has the highest respect of their parents because he does not understand their everyday problems, they are likely to lose interest in going to church and Sunday school. Some, of course, remain loyal; so often these are the very young people who join 4H clubs and take the leadership in rural youth and other programs growing out of such new agencies as the Extension Service. A considerable number find so much of their time taken in school activities that they come to look upon church programs as an obligation to be sidestepped if possible. Not a few seek their own pleasures in the numerous forms of commercial amusements in the nearby city or larger town and may lose interest in most of the local activities, many of which seem colorless and banal to them. The rural church is thus confronted with the task of building a living, virile program for youth, one dealing with the every-day problems of youth in agriculture.

Young people of rural communities are faced with some very serious problems affecting their life decisions and philosophies. They realize it is no longer easy to get away from farm life into a better life in the city. If they do not want to remain on the farm they have the difficult task of determining what training to get and how to get that training for life in non-farm pursuits. They are told

the field is crowded and that one is lucky to get a job these days. Given an opportunity to develop those qualities which have always been an asset in a life work—thrift, ability to work, fair-dealing, perseverance, and honesty, to mention only a few—and some knowledge as to opportunities, many can find their places. The church can help develop these qualities; the church can restore the ideals of service so largely displaced by the profit motive in the past two decades.

The problem of disparity in opportunity facing rural youth is a problem for the whole of society. In rural areas the schools are not so good, churches are often inferior, and the chances for adequate training for life work in the city are not as good as for city youth. The facilities for training for life on the farm, likewise, are not too good in many rural communities, although fortunately more and more of them are recognizing the need for scientific training in agriculture by introducing departments of agriculture in high schools. Yet many farmers are themselves reluctant to provide their sons and daughters such training, feeling that those who plan to farm should leave school as soon as possible. This attitude is reflected to some extent in the programs of some farm organizations which bend all their efforts to increase the economic status of the farmer in the immediate present and provide no training for youth in any kind of a life philosophy.

The church in many rural communities has not been able to help much in these situations. Many churches have been so taken up with problems of self-support that they have not taken time to treat these basic problems of rural youth. The city church is partially responsible, for

it insists upon training ministers for the urban church; thus many of the best from rural areas are attracted to the city. Rural youth, therefore, feel that they are faced with a second best church with an underpaid minister; some of those sent out from the city, they find, preach an unadjusted theology, one that may be outworn from the youth's point of view.

Youth find it the more difficult to form a satisfactory life philosophy because there are those in the church who seem to have so badly warped life philosophies. The few who half-heartedly support the church and turn to bridge clubs, dances, Sunday movies, and even questionable forms of diversion make the forming of convictions regarding religious teachings hard for serious-minded young people. Some of these young people, therefore, turn away from the church to seek a life philosophy. Others take the easy course, going in large numbers to taverns and other places where an unwholesome type of leadership has an influence upon them.

Many youths today, however, have found considerable satisfaction in extra-church activities. A large number of 4H clubs and an increasing number of rural youth groups for young adults are attracting some of the most forward looking and promising young people in the rural communities. The rural church cannot remain indifferent to these activities. It should find in them the kind of opportunity for spiritual guidance that will keep the groups on a high moral plane. Some churches are now doing this. Why not? Was it not the church that was the first agency in America to set up institutions of higher learning? Was it not the church indeed that in many cases

in Europe started coöperative activities of one kind or another?

The churches will command the interest, attention, and attendance of young people as soon as their programs are reshaped to become unique and modern in their approach; when the open doors of the church present an atmosphere of friendliness and good will. Since all of the churches, city and country, serve youth, this is a challenge to the city as much as to the rural church.

The Stimulation of Culture and Religious Motivation

Persons in the "upper crust" in America have been so busy making money that they have had little time for leisure and meditation. Lacking such they have become hard and cynical and have tended to operate their businesses so as to keep within the law; some have even sought to bend the law to their own designs.

A greater leisure is coming to the people of America, but much of it is coming in the wrong way. Millions of unemployed look to governmentally supported recreation programs for some relief; but those whose economic problems are not solved see little joy in leisure time programs. Leisure should come as a result of honest labor and the right to enjoy the fruits of that labor—not as a result of the lack of opportunity to work. Given leisure, people, properly directed, will create the finest things there are in life. True art grows out of a culture in which the people live together happily and in deep accord. Leisure should not be the privilege of the few and the scourge of the many—it is best used when earned.

Farm life at its best demonstrates the value of leisure properly earned. Hard work followed by periods of relaxation—rush seasons followed by slack—these are the times when creative and expressional spirits arise. Farm people today do have more leisure than formerly, for their work can be done more quickly—they have more need for creative leisure, for their work is more mechanized. Institutions teaching farm people the best use of leisure as well as the best use of work time are storing up one of the most valuable resources to be found anywhere.

Time to think—this has also been denied the busy city man.[15] But the farmer can find time to think even while working. Though machines in agriculture and new discoveries in controlling plant and animal life may have tended to take away the element of awe in natural processes, yet much remains on a farm to stimulate thought and induce meditation. This is the supreme realm of the church—"think on these things"—but a worldly church with its nose to the grindstone in maintaining a bare existence has not been able to do much stimulating. The rural church has had too many of the city's apprentices, misfits, and "worn out preachers" to have been able to instill sufficient respect to keep up attendance and support—much less give stimulation for meditation. The people of rural areas will continue to turn from the church as long as the church looks upon these areas as training grounds and "stepping stones" for servants of the city churches.

The kind of religious motivation needed in rural areas is now being given chiefly in two ways: (1) by the all

[15] Griffeth, Ross John, "The Bible and Rural Life." The Standard Pub. Co., Cincinnati, 1937, page 102.

too few people living in rural areas who still have a deep religious conviction and (2) by the all too few ministers who choose to serve in the rural areas and who strive to understand their people and give "instruction, consolation, and inspiration." [16] Rural life is in need of such men and women—the church, both in rural and urban areas must strive to equalize the situation if the church is to continue as an effective Christian institution in American life.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What conditions have brought about the much discussed inequality between urban and rural areas?
2. In what ways have the rural areas helped advance urban areas at the expense of the rural areas?
3. How can the trend toward smaller families be changed? In what way can it be done so as to affect urban as well as rural areas?
4. What obligation does the urban church have for the youth in rural areas? How can this obligation be met and what should be the role of the rural church in such a program?
5. How can churches of various denominations develop a different type of motivation than that which finds its expression in profit seeking?

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CHAPTER VIII

SIGNIFICANT TRENDS AFFECTING RURAL LIFE

The Increase of Tenancy

Rural and urban people face in common the "decline in general ownership of an equity in land and buildings. In our farming communities farm ownership or equity in the hands of those who are tilling the soil is declining, and in the larger cities, especially, the percentage of home ownership has reached its peak and is going down. In some of the more congested areas ownership of home has almost disappeared." [1] Though tenancy with written leases providing long-time tenure can assure relative security, farm and city people alike who rent from someone else are always bound to feel somewhat insecure. The very fact that they only "lease" and that the lease may expire and not be renewed or for some reason be cancelled makes for a feeling of insecurity. The ownership of a piece of land, especially if it is big enough and fertile enough to provide much of the home-food needs and something in the way of a cash income, gives a family something of a feeling of security.

At least part ownership in the means of production, land or other agencies, has been a stabilizing influence in any civilization. Give a man the knowledge that he has a "vested interest" in a farm or factory and his attitude toward it will change; he is more open-minded about conserving its resources for he has an "interest" in it. He will

[1] "Our Cities." Published by the National Resources Committee, page vi.

sacrifice immediate high returns—cash grain sacrificed to income from livestock and high wage levels sacrificed to participation in good profits—in order that more efficient methods may be used to insure steady and permanent returns.

The trend toward non-ownership by the people of their economic means, both in the country and the city, is therefore against the best interests of society; the people who have little in the way of economic goods become interested in immediate returns only, whether they be in the factory or on the farm. Thus a system on the farm or in the factory tending toward the exploitation of the soil or high-wage rates at the expense of both employment and production may be considered anti-social.[2]

A national policy to give masses repossession of farms and a vested interest in factories, mines, and in systems of distribution will lessen strikes, develop a spirit of conservation and thrift, make for a wider distribution of wealth and create a greater feeling in a democracy; this would forestall all efforts to overthrow the democracy or create dictatorial forms of government.

The church, rural and urban, needs to take heed of the present trend in order that it may help change it—to make the people see the value of democracy in economic life as in political and religious life. Changes in the systems must come slowly—be built upon sound plans—to be most effective.

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[2] See Taylor, Carl C., Allin, Busrod W., and Baker, O. E., "Public Purposes in Soil Use," in "Soils and Men." The Yearbook of Agriculture, 1938, U. S. D. A., page 47, for the statement "The central purpose in the use of land (is to) sustain the highest possible standard of living for the people of the United States."

Changes are now taking place tending toward a slowing up of the present trend toward dispossession. Cheaper credit with the organization owned by those who use it; better methods of production in which conservation is at the heart of control measures; improved systems of distribution in which profits from new technologies are passed on to the consumers in the form of lower prices; a stabilized monetary system providing for debt payments on the same value basis as when contracted; more equitable systems of taxation based on ability to pay—these are coming. Coöperatives, both producer and consumer, and systems of profit sharing in industry—these likewise are coming. Conservative efforts to encourage these forces will be far more effective than drastic agitation "to overthrow our evil capitalistic system" or inaugurate a "new economic order in America."

The Spread of Urban Influences

The city has always had an attraction for rural people and especially for the youth of the country. Many "urbanisms" have therefore laid hold upon the rural people and have made rather significant changes in rural life—not all good, not all bad.[3]

The decreasing size of farm families is probably the most significant evidence of the influence of the urban on rural life. Mechanization, which has many values in releasing workers from greater physical burdens, has had its effect on sizes of families; it came first in the

[3] In "Urbanization," by John Griffin Thompson, a strong case is made for the city as the source of many values, emphasis being put upon the political, in an effort to examine critically the results of urbanization.

cities on a large scale, and is now becoming effective in rural life. The heavy investment required to start farming due to mechanization has caused young folks to postpone marriage, though young people on farms still marry earlier than those in the cities. Mechanization on farms makes labor less necessary, hence farm children are no longer so much of an economic asset. Smaller families, also, are those in which high divorce rates and broken families occur—these are more frequent in rural areas than previously, though not so prevalent yet as in urban areas. Thus urban influences are attacking the solidarity of the family institution on the farm.

Urbanism is evident, also, in the increasing use of modern utilities—the telephone, radio, automobile, electric power, and similar conveniences. The use of the radio brings many programs, largely urban in their setting and philosophy, into the farm home. The few radio programs claiming to be rural are all too frequently rude "take-offs" on rural life—with emphasis upon "mountain music," the "barn dance" and other crude forms of amusement, leaving out some of the finer elements in rural cultural life. The automobile and hard road have made city attractions more accessible and movies, dances, and professional athletic events draw a heavy patronage from rural areas. These modern forms of communication have tended to create an "impersonality" in rural areas characteristic of city life, which is opposed to the natural neighborliness of rural areas.

Other evidences of urbanization are that farmers are no longer self sufficient—they, too, live in a "derivative" economy; that government has tended to become distant and complex; that high mobility and tenancy exists in

rural areas as in urban ones; that superficiality, anonymity, and fickle loyalties have permeated to rural areas. Each farmer, like each city man, is driven by the economic order to "look out for himself." Relations among people become formal and religion, also, partakes of formality.

Freedom from tradition has developed a rationality in city life which has found its way into rural life; and with this rationality there has come a greater tolerance, which sometimes becomes more a lack of interest, characterized by a "let George do it" attitude, than a willingness to take time to see the thing as the other fellow sees it.

Workers in rural areas are confronted by these urbanizing influences. Their real concern is that the best of these influences become implanted in rural life and that the worst be thrown off. The present trend seems to be anything but this, for things thrown off by the city seem to find their way into rural areas—the tavern, road house, and carnival are examples. The church, both in rural and urban areas, can be an influence in preserving the best—a good family life, a love for good music, neighborliness, a concern for one's fellow man, a realness and earnestness, all conducive to the good life. These are more inherent in rural than in urban life. The church can be a factor in spreading a homogeneous culture—the improvement of quality in public utilities, education, social welfare, art, and literature—both in the city and the country.

The Outreaching of Government

The government is of the people. "The safety, welfare, and happiness of the men, women, and children who compose the American people constitute the only justification of government. They are the ends for which all our

resources—land, water, minerals, plants, animals, technology, institutions, and laws—are merely instruments." [4]

Government is in the life of every man, woman, and child in America as it has never been before. In fact, to the extent to which business has failed to provide the people with income and security, government has stepped in. It could do no less. In 1935, government was the second major source of income, contributing 16 per cent of the total income paid out.[5] No matter how far government goes into the life of the people, the chief concern in America is that it remain "of the people, for the people and by the people."

Liberty Hyde Bailey states that the foundation of true democracy rests on conditions of daily living—a life close to nature. The farmer is the keeper of the earth. To him we must look for interpretation of the earth in our civic relations. "There is no democracy if the rural side is vassaled to an urban or industrial proletariat," writes Dr. Bailey. George Russell, the Irish poet, says, "It may seem a grotesque juxtaposition of things essentially different in character to talk of national idealism and then of farming, but it is so. They are inseparable. The national idealism which will not go into the fields and deal with the fortune of the working farmers is false idealism." [6]

Political and social forces must work with farmers, as well as with city people, rather than for them. A man may be allowed to own farm land only as long as he can

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[4] "Our Cities." Published by the National Resources Committee, page 1.

[5] "Who Gets the National Income?" Consumers' Guide, January 25, 1935.

[6] Russell, George, "The National Being." Page 43. By permission of the Macmillan Company, publishers.

keep it fertile, support a proper kind of life, and contribute to the welfare of others. Speculative ownership is thus undemocratic. A land policy in a truly democratic country sees that fertility is safeguarded and that the socially and economically responsible may own the land. Thus from agriculture which not only produces the surplus food for world consumption, but also the surplus population, should spring the true basis of democratic organization—a combination of individualism and interest in the common good so essential in a democracy.

The church is an essential institution in a democracy. Freedom to earn a living and to learn how to live and to worship as one desires have been guaranteed by democratic governments. The institutions leading people to live the best possible life together—churches—help guarantee that freedom by quickening the consciences of the people so that they see values in living for each other.

Conflict in Community Life

Increased complexity of social and economic life seems to induce conflict. This is especially true where people become individualistic, impersonal, and mercenary. The use of money and the making of profits has led to undue concern for economic advancement at the sacrifice of other values in life. Out of economic self-seeking has come economic groups and classes in direct conflict with each other. The landlord wants the highest returns possible as soon as possible and he seeks the tenant that will bring them, even at the sacrifice of family welfare. The corporation manager, desiring low costs of production, competes with labor unions whose interests are in high wage

rates. Thus economic conflict groups are a potent factor in community life, and they seem to be increasing in number.

Likewise, groups built around self-interest develop in other phases of life. Individual churches become interested in their self-promotion, some at the sacrifice of other groups. The present trend toward inter-denominational coöperation is significant—it is the hope of many that one of the most serious conflicts in community life may thus be overcome.

Other conflicts can then be overcome more easily—in business, education, and in all forms of group life in the community.

The Secularization of Rural Life

A study of motives impelling people to act as they do leads many to the conclusion that the most effective is the "profit" motive and the least effective the "service" motive. The profit motive is directly related to economic security and the economic security of peoples the world over has been so severely shaken that one is not surprised at the attention given to the possibilities of profit by millions of people. Modern industrial enterprises have linked the words "profit" and "service" by advertising "service" elements in goods they have to sell. The admonition "what doth it profit a man" today falls on barren ground unless it is scaled to modern conditions and grounded in modern experiences.

Security through profit is only one modern goal. Others are for recognition, for new experience, and for response. The amassing of wealth is for some only a means of finding new ways of getting a thrill out of living, an opportunity of securing high place of approval and power, and

a chance to influence masses of people to accept belief in a particular policy or doctrine.

These evidences of secularization—which apply both in the country and the city—are of real concern to a church which follows one who urged us to "do unto others as we would have them do unto us." It is evidence, according to Thomas Jesse Jones, that the churches are not exerting the influences worthy of that "Great Teacher" who "gave humanity the beatitudes and announced the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man." Rural life, with its roots in natural processes, is the source from which may come a reinterpretation of these teachings. "In view of the ever-increasing control of social processes by urban standards and ideals, it is emphatically important to recognize the vital contributions of rural communities, always the primary sources of population and the guardians of the Holy Earth." [7]

The Challenge to the Church

"The church must refuse any standard of conduct which would hurt, degrade or dishearten the humblest. It must stand sternly against the claims of egotism and pride and give more costly concern to human need. It must create a solidarity among Christians stronger than all the divisions which disrupt the human family. The Christian must take sides, knowing that he cannot always actively love his neighbor without actively opposing his neighbor's exploiters." [8] These pronouncements from the

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[7] Jones, Thomas Jesse, "Church and Community." The Agricultural Missions Foundation, Mimeo. series, No. 77.

[8] Brummit, Dan, "The Oxford Manifesto for a United Church." Mimeo. pamphlet issued by the International Council of Religious Education.

Oxford Conference summarizes as well as anything could the "code" that should guide the church in its entire program. Fundamentally, the church is the one institution upholding the highest there is in life. The source of the finest there is in the church is in the rural areas. The most significant modern trend is the one toward a genuine interest on the part of all the people in rural life. The church must take its place with other institutions in preserving the best there is in rural life for it is the "soil and root" of our national life.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What changes in national, state, and local policy are necessary to induce ownership by operators of the means of production?
2. What forms of urbanization are constructive and what are destructive in rural life?
3. What can be done to conserve the best in rural life in the face of the trend toward urbanization?
4. How can government become "of the people?" What indications are there that the people are losing their government to minority groups? What ways can be worked out to preserve democracy so far as the mass of people in the average community are concerned?
5. What can be done by the church to revitalize and spiritualize the present secular forms of community life?

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